Co-simplicity

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MASTHEAD

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EDITORIAL

Co-simplicity denominates a common approach for all AY 2015-2016 eight Master 1 design-studios for the KU Leuven`s campus Ghent Faculty of Architecture International Master Program `Resilient and Sustainable Strategies.` Building upon the program`s earlier `Acting in Redundancy[1]` design-studio series, co-simplicity continues a design approach focusing on small-scale, fragile architectural interventions within Ghent`s often intricate urban conditions. This publication elaborates on some key-issues pertaining to the co-simplicity design studio`s, such as materiality, sense of place and design-pedagogy. A former student exemplifies the impact of the program`s design-approach on his work, now as young professional.

Selected design-projects are a testimony of students` immersion, understanding and recognition the city of Ghent`s fragile essence and identity. Characterized by an intuitive and rational synergetic design-thinking attitude these projects each focus on existing qualities, transfiguring dormant potentialities into subtle contextual interventions.

With this publication we foremost aim to enthuse future students to similarly commit to such delicate design-attitude and approach, building onto site-specific conditions.

Finally, we hope architects, urban planners, stakeholders and city-administrations may find some inspiration in how local morphology and societal context can help define sustainable urban-architectural interventions.

1 See also: 2015 `Acting in Redundancy` publication by C. Mengé et al.

CONTENT

STUDIO BRIEF – CO-SIMPLICITY

Bruno Peeters

Grey indeterminancy, variable causality and vague predisposition are hallmarks of the system, …(S)implicity piled upon simplicity creates complexity.

CO-SIMPLICITY

Co-simplicity rather than being a specific design-assignment could perhaps better be defined as a design-approach, aimed at achieving several pedagogic, educational and design outcomes along multiple dimensions. As such, co-simplicity applies to design-strategies simultaneously addressing the larger issues of sustainability, resilience and local priorities.
Obviously, architects` scope of intervention is predominantly limited to building(s). Inculcating awareness about local design contexts, varying widely even within a single project area could thus be defined as the assignment`s key pedagogic goal. Making students understand micro-local contexts should help remove ingrained barriers and tap design potential and affinities at an important stage of the design-thinking learning process.

A profound apprehension of local conditions, knowledge and classification of determining factors according to their built outcomes enhances the relevance of potential co-simplicity design-interventions. Co-simplicity`s final ambition therefore is about raising awareness on the potentials of pilot-architecture based policymaking and its implementation.
Co-simplicity, first coined in 2013, was specifically developed for an assignment jointly developed with Seoul National University and Sungkyunkwan University on the North-Korean city of Gaeseong under the Ausmip Mundus program . It was then fine-tuned and successfully implemented in 2014 for a localized assignment `Kokumi ` covering Brussels` multi-ethnic `Liedts-Square` neighborhood. Both try-outs promoted the implementation of design-policies and projects aiming to link global and local concerns through one design strategy.
Against this backdrop, the co-simplicity approach evolved as a way to achieve multiple comparable outcomes through a single design-policy. It was implemented for a first time in 2015 at KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture (FA-KUL) campus Ghent International Master Program `Resilient and Sustainable Strategies`. As can be determined from included student design-work, some urban morphologies are particularly well-suited to a co-simplicity approach. However, independent of any concrete site-related factors, students` achieving co-simplicity equally depends on the specific coherence and interaction with the curricular framework within which such design-program is embedded.

For the academic year 2015-2016, herding 115 international students and eight tutors, counting 34 nationalities, 33% non-EU students and a similarly wide diversity of backgrounds and skills within a disparate curricular context posed particular challenges.
The design process thus progressed largely disconnected from students` theory curriculum, inhibiting the design-studio`s multi-dimensional potential. Emolliently defined as `self-navigation`, successful output evidently stands or falls with students` intake quality, maturation, pre-acquired skills and qualifications.

Peer Assisted Learning Environment, [PALe]

Within the co-simplicity design-studio therefore the pedagogic concept of `self-navigation` was as it were maximized through running the entire design-process via Peer Assisted Learning Environments, or PALe`s. Each such PALe team consisted of four to five students, merging as much as possible different skills, nationalities and cultural backgrounds; specific mechanisms were put into place to foment balanced PALe team-compositions. Countering prevailing curricular elision, PALe`s were a crucial element to overcome students` in-born behavioral, cultural, educational or professional imbedded obstructions.

Ensuing multi-national PALe`s hence engaged into a permanent cross-over dialogue.

Every individual PALe embedded student concluded the assignment with a comprehensive proposal subsuming one's own interpretation of 'co-simplicity' within PALe's jointly developed framework. To this extent each PALe construed its own co-simplicity approach enabling the development of more than one individual architectural pilot-project outcome within a single design-strategy.

Given FA-KUL`s `Resilient and Sustainable Strategies` program focus, outcomes would be expected to incorporate climate-friendly strategies. Such obvious ambition however ignores curricular constraints. The process of each PALe's and its individual students to position and define their stance vis-a-vis a chosen site incubated autonomously, encapsulated within the confines of the design-studio. The program's enduring perfunctory non-aligned content, with each course seemingly going its own way, flouts the potential of generating any cross-curricular added value. Though some developed PALe 'design-strategies' managed to address both global and local socio-economic environmental issues, an ensuing 'buildable' translation and implementation to the level of architecture materialized only haphazardly. Never the less, implementation, - not strategy, is what might be expected from future architects.

Peer Ascertained Leveling

Enhancing cross-over interactions, alternating co-evaluations and exposure of generated design-work to all eight tutors and student-teams was an integral part of `co-simplicity` design-studio dynamics. Rotation of staff joined tutors, student-teams and occasionally representatives and local decision-makers, provided for a window within which design proposals viability were evaluated rather than based on individual tutors` preferences.

Within this broad window PALe`s and individual students could develop output without being considered too extreme to gain or keep tutors' approval, if deemed acceptable within the current climate of academization and professional orientation. Within such self-propelled design-studio inscape, the co-simplicity window generated an approach identifying which ideas defined the boundaries of acceptability within the design-studio environment.

A crucial element thereof were PALes and individual students capacity to communicate concisely their ideas for an evaluator-panel or audience not always familiar with their work and in particular internalized design-thinking processes and project progression over time.

Proponents of design or other output outside this window needed to persuade or educate tutors in order to reframe and/or expand the window. Leveling of the contours within which PALe's operated primarily depended on peer ascertained reviews and grading.

Assignment

'Co-simplicity' invoked FA-KUL International Master students to investigate in-depth a site, urban local context and morphology of the post-industrial Gent-Oost-Dampoort area, [GOD]. Mainly developed during the 19-20th century, [GOD] stretches about 3.3 km from Ghent`s new harbor in the North to the river l'Escaut to the South and is defined and transected by important railway infrastructures.

A first important task required each PALe to select and explore a site. Field-work and findings were to be coalesced into the framing of contemporary socio-cultural-environmental and economic design-challenges, embedded within the larger international debate on sustainability and resilience. Within the assignment`s design-scope and limited one semester time-frame, sustainability pertained here to the ability to interpret a site, neighborhood or city-district with a committed attitude resulting in the optimization of a design-induced `editing` process of given redundant conditions. The assignment, organized along PALe`s required a collective design development deemed fundamental to an equilibrated and sequential reductive progress enabling to reframe site-specific complexities.

Within the extended [GOD] area student-teams each selected their own site. Supportive analysis and in-depth awareness about each chosen location's fragile essence, qualities and specificities were to result in the formulation of individually designed architectural pilot-projects, enhancing sustainable relations between inhabitants, local environment and context.

As an approach, co-simplicity is inherently multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral. Incorporating multiple objectives co-simplicity aims to stimulate the development of design-thinking prototyping, blending both editing and resilience oriented mitigation of the existing urban environment and its given resources.

Design-output focusses on facilitating long-term sustainable micro-urban strategies assimilating global and local socio-environmental concerns within a coherent 'Acting in Redundancy' spatial design-strategy. As such design-proposals were expected to integrate the chosen locality's morphology, socio-economic environmental conditions, citizens and other civil society actors, including businesses bottom-up. Within this framework, design proposals were directed towards pluri-potential design capacitation, responding to site or neighborhoods` local needs as self-defined by each PALe team.

A priori 'co-simplicity' refers to design-thinking incubation simultaneously addressing globally induced sustainability and resilience issues as well as PALe-determined local design-editing priorities. Recognizing a site's fragile essence and identity, proposals focused on existing qualities transfiguring dormant potentialities into a series of coherent contextual interventions. Careful extraction of redundancies and generated added value of obvious and simple architectural insertions were to enforce selected sites' social resilience, developed within the larger scale of a PALe outlined strategy or master-plan.

The co-simplicity approach is characterized by both an intuitive and rational synergetic provocative design-thinking attitude. Advancement of individual and team-work is interdependent, following a concatenative series of stages;
1. Choice of location; Redundancy, Redesign & Erosion.
2. Understanding; Potentials, (G)locality, Context, Analysis & Stance.
3. Positioning; Strategy, Priorities, Design-Editing, Added Value & Socio-tech.
4. Pilot-Program; Simplicity, Purposefulness & Consciousness.
5. Pilot-project; Co-simplicity.

Design Process

Each PALe team, a somehow coerced reflection of the program`s cosmopolitan student-body, generated in dialogue with its tutors internal and creative interactions which under an ideal scenario developed along four major junctures.

In a first immersive phase, understanding [GOD]'s widely varying micro-local contexts was to remove mental barriers and tap into potentials, adopting a co-simplicity approach at the earliest stage of PALe initiated design processes. To this purpose PALe's investigated existing contexts and developed a sentient and intuitive reading of a chosen location, facilitating the development of future local design-editing strategies.
Each PALe then identified potential pilot-project sites, localities or programs either under the jurisdiction of public, private or corporate authorities. Concluding such immersive phase, this entailed assessing thoroughly local socio-economic and cultural frameworks as well as the leeway, potentials and resources of a chosen site.

In a second phase, classification of local conditions, determining factors and regulations according to their potential outcomes enhanced PALe's abilities to generate ideas through an internal process of creative abrasion. To this extent local contexts and formulation of design-editing priorities were to be crucially examined, leading to demand-driven design strategies and pilot-projects tailored to local circumstances. Such process, internal to each PALe was to enable an efficient internal evidence-based discourse and debate, fostering the development of a co-simplicity approach per team.
These internal PALe participatory processes to which all its members contribute are essential for the co-simplicity approach decision-making process, signally dependent on propitious team-work. In contradistinction, maladroit internal as well as external PALe incapacitations and overall program constraints deter progression beyond this phase, traducing output into verbose `post-project ` complacency.

Ultimately then, in a third phase of Creative resolution, each PALe and individual student were to generate integrative design-decisions combining disparate or even opposing ideas. This enabled each PALe to detect potential gridlocks, simultaneously taking full advantage of each team's cross-cultural synergies.

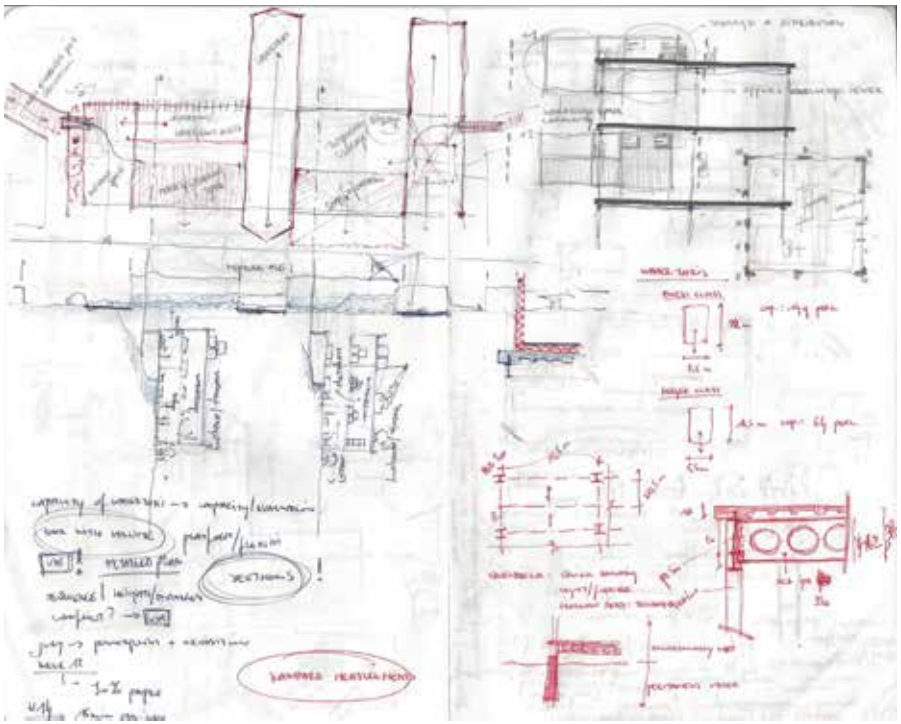
Overcoming internal dialectics, PALe's thus progressed towards a co-simplicity micro-urban design strategy proposal clearly expressing;
1. Purpose; positioning within the international Sustainability and Resilience debate, transducted onto a chosen site.
2. Shared Values; on what PALe members agree and why.
3. Rules of Engagement; internal interaction and how this impacts individual & PAL design-thinking.
4. Commitment; generation of a strong team willing and able to foster design proto-typing – through trial and error.

At this stage, initiation of a parallel individual design development required co-simplicity objectives and design-editing strategies to be well defined. Following a 'back-casting ' decision-making process, this fueled the development of desirable future micro-urban scenarios and formulation of individual pilot-projects as how to design co-simplicity attainment.
This process is to be understood within a context of collective discovery based on concepts of purposefulness, rather than methodical justification. What matters are ideas, not the pursuit of artistic or scientific validity.

Finally, in an ideal scenario and perhaps closest to what can be defined as design-driven research, successful PALe`s collective design strategies then expanded through the rapid development of individual architectural proto-types, programming and design-solutions. An intensive sequence of test and experimental pilot-projects designs through quick pursuit, reflection and adjustments facilitated innovative solutions substantiating PALe's 'collective genius'. Completing such phase of 'Creative Agility', as a final output students concomitantly presented an individual pilot-project `PALe-delivered` as one.

AFTER THE STUDIOS

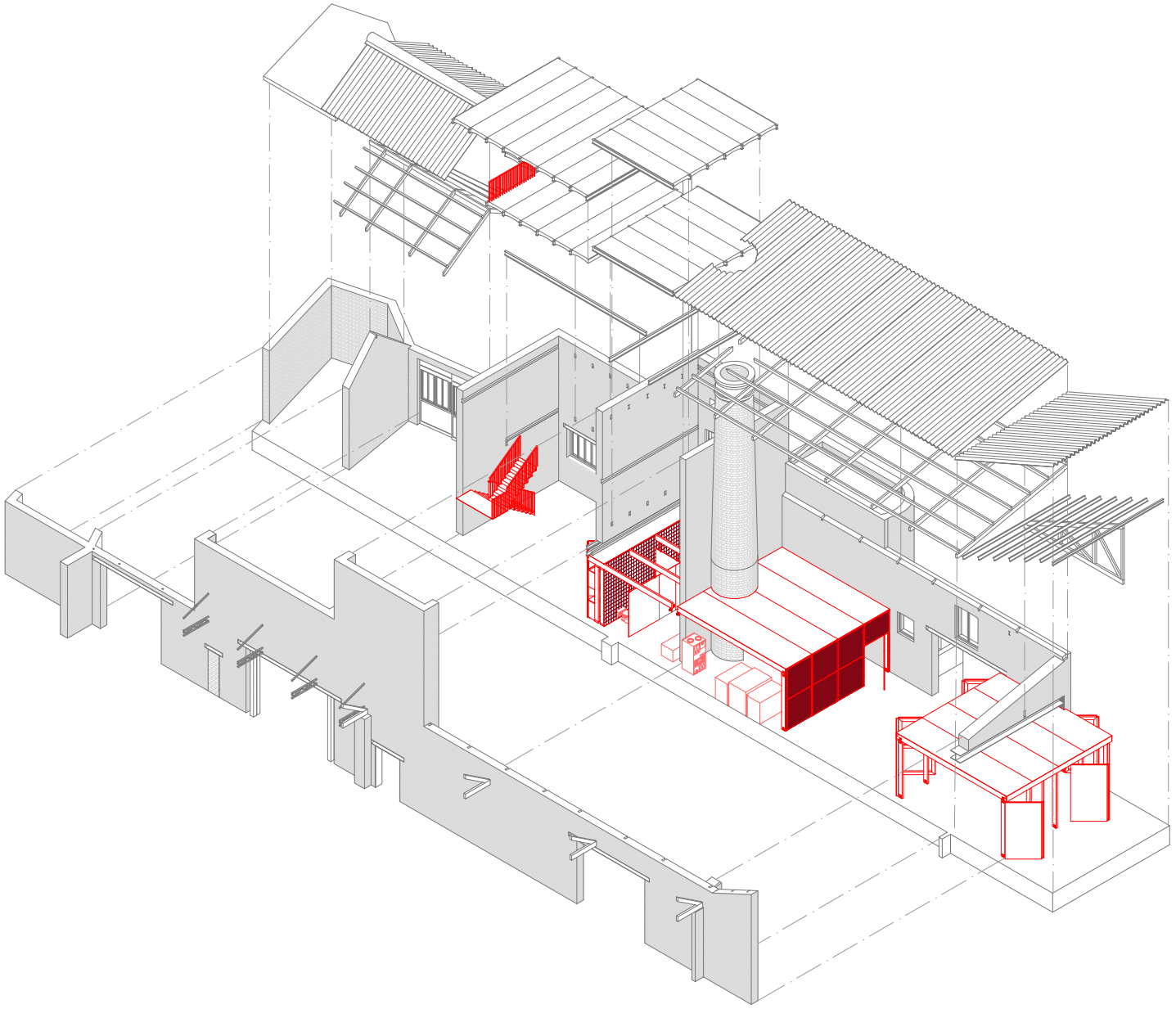
Ruben Janssens



As an architecture student, you expect the design studio to be a tool to enhance your ability to develop projects within a certain hot topic subject, concerning the current socio-economic conditions and problematics. If the design studio framework then happens to coincide with personal interests and ambitions, it creates a unique condition to start developing your own way of working and finding a good process for yourself to build up good projects. I had the privilege to be in a situation where both came together with having team members that shared the same ideas and ambitions, which led to some incredible moments and positively welcomed projects throughout the whole process. Two elements in the development process of all these projects stayed with me and still today form an important base to how I approach new urban challenges. The 'Acting in Redundancy' studio which I attended in my first year of masters, focused on how fragile adaptations and additions in the existing urban tissue can stimulate and incubate big social changes. We discovered an old industry cluster on the edge of the old city center, which in time had become a private parking rented out to inhabitants from around the premises. The strategy we came up with foresaw 3 tactile additions into the existing building cluster, that facilitate a range of multiple uses and adaptations of the space (p. 16). This not only made the space more usable and practical, but it also opened it up as part of a neighborhood infrastructure and network.

The idea of a neighborhood network was something that stayed in my mind during the mapping process of my master thesis project, 'Coney Island – A Resilient Network' (p. 20). Seeing a settlement structure and neighborhood as an existing network where you can work with, plug in to and strengthen, makes your project into a social and economic catalyst which enhances the whole local society. A thorough mapping and an incremental knowledge of the site always makes for a more thought-through project. When I decided to specialize in Human Settlements, we did a project on the role of social housing clusters in a landscape that is not dominated by the settlement structure but through landscape elements (p. 22). This reading of the site allowed us to think beyond the socio-cultural issues of the housing projects, and give them a new place and role within a bigger and connected landscape.
A second element that for me was always a tool of big importance to develop but also communicate a project, is a scale model. For the Zilverhof Factories project the model was a real team moment because it was a testing group for the project as well as a way for us to communicate the most important aspect of the project – namely the scenarios and uses made possible by the intervention (QR on p. 17 and picture p.18). Within the Coney Island project on the other hand, the model was used as a medium to show how the interventions where both simple in volume and structure, and reacting to their direct environment (p. 19). In this sense, it is important to mention that a model should be a tool – and thus used throughout the process to test your thoughts and decisions.

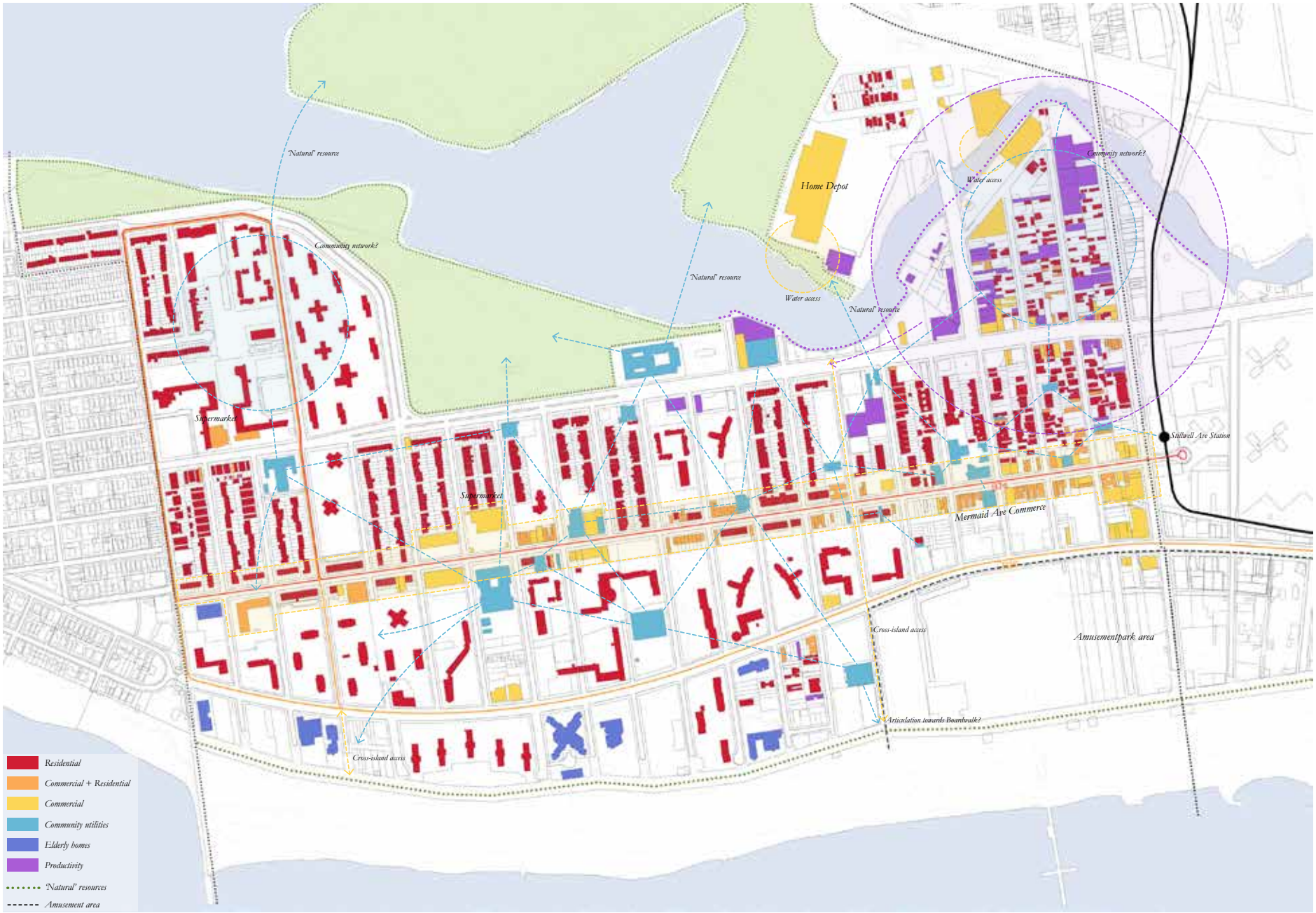
A design studio like 'Acting in Redundancy' and the in this publication concluded 'Co-simplicity', are crucial to trigger an eager to understand the environment and context that young architects get to work in. Since socio-economic and ecological contexts are getting ever more complex it is eminent that we, parallel to the big scale urban projects, manage to make well-embedded and catalyzing urban projects that strengthen the existing social structures and benefit from the valuable conditions that urban spaces of today already have to offer.



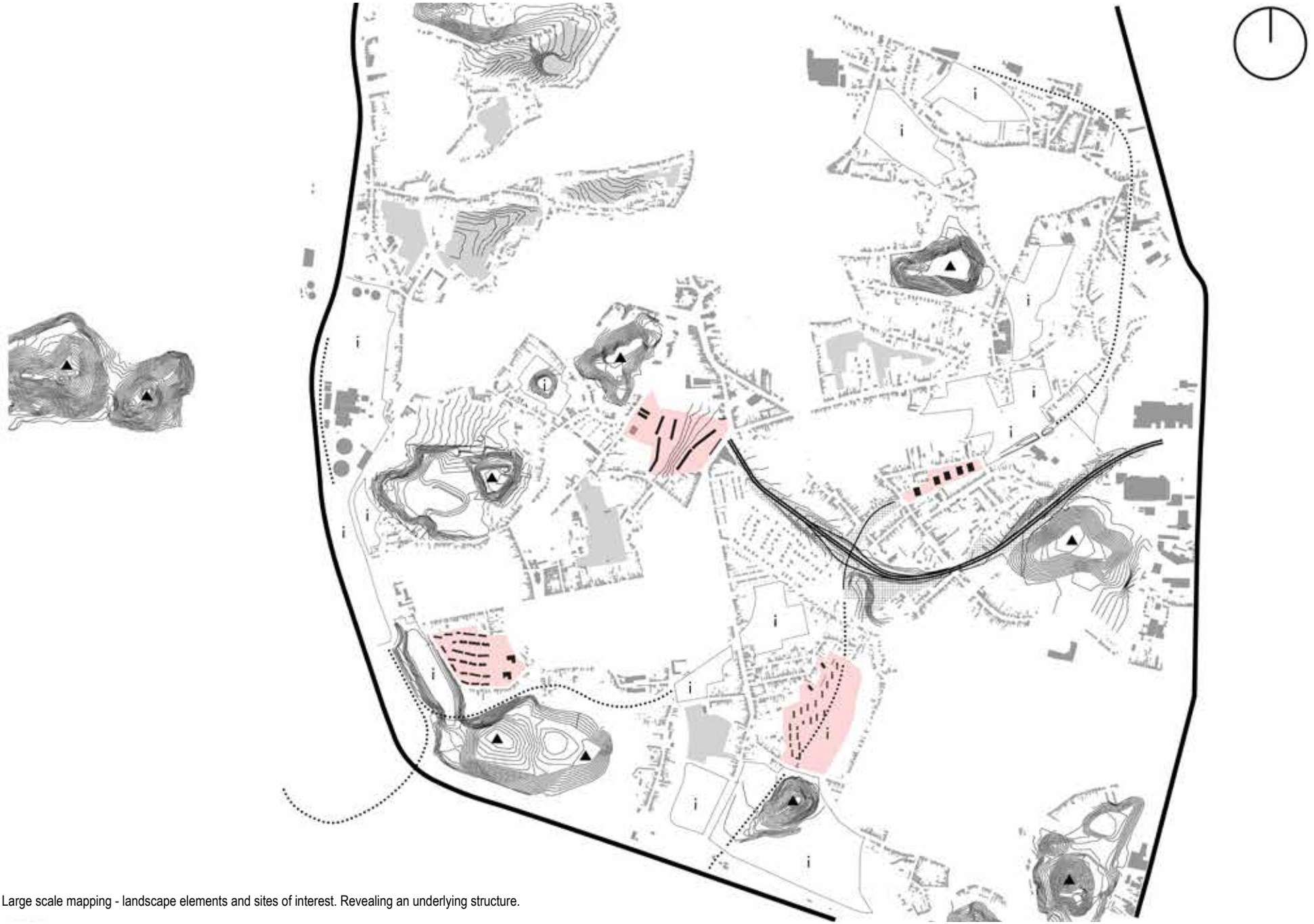
Axonometry - Threefold intervention facilitating multiple use.
(You can find the stop-motion on developed scenarios and uses via the QR)

Teamwork - Teamproduction.

Model for thesis project - neighbourhood hub 21st street Coney Island.



Neighborhood mapping - Mapping existing interlacing structure in the neighbourhood and recognizing strategic points for intervention.



Large scale mapping - landscape elements and sites of interest. Revealing an underlying structure.

SENSE OF PLACE

Catherine Mengé

In the current rapidly changing ecological, economical and social context of today, designers with great sensitivity and responsibility to pursue sustainable spatial development is needed more then ever. Within this studio students had the opportunity to train this sensible attitude that to a large extend is based on a profound respect for the 'specificity of the place' and the 'déjà-là'.. An in-depth study of the existing situation should be the starting point for any urban or architectural development that can give the right answer to the spatial, ecological, social and even economical necessities of a place. Moreover the design is not about functionality and purely rational considerations only, but also about a more intuitive approach, showing that complexity is taken into account and that the project responds to the universal need for authenticity and beauty.

The question could be raised how within education of architecural design these skills can be trained so that future architects, learn to more in depth examine the context and find strong but sensible arguments to create a better living environment.

The return to the context

The 'death' of the contextless 'Modernism' dates according to architecural historian Charles Jencks of 15 July 1972. This was the moment when the large-scale housing project Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis, Missouri, was demolished. Every where in the world modernistic developments of the seventies, neglected the specificity of a place and were creating inhuman living environments. Sociologists complained about lifeless neighborhoods and architects pleaded for more hospitable environments on a human scale. Although this awareness has always been present to some extent in the past 40 years, we notice that many architectural projects at this moment still miss contextual sensitivity because they need to respond to purely economic or political rationals.

Specificity of a place

Since the seventies, some architects refer to the principle of Genius Loci, or the 'soul of a place' as a guide to understand the specificity of a place and to desig projects that take into account of this 'soul'.

Within this approach two complementary views on Genius loci will be highlighted, particularly the theory of Christan Norberg-Schulz (1976) and the vision of Jean Nouvel(2005). These fascinating visions are complementary and reveal some facets what the 'soul of a place' is all about and stress the complexity of a design attitude that takes into account all this sensitive information.

Christian Norberg-Schulz , wrote in 1976 in his book Genius Loci the following quote : "Planning" does not help much as long as the concrete, qualitative nature of places is ignored. He stressed very much the morphological qualities of built structures as the reflection of the society we live in.

In 2005 Jean Nouvel also pleaded in his 'Lousiana Manifest' in favour of a type of architecture that is more in touch with the place. Architecture c'est être attentif à la respiration d'un lieu vivant, à ses pulsations, c'est interpréter ses rythmes pour inventer ….. l'urbanisme faut établir des règles sensibles, poétiques, des orientations qui parleront de couleurs, d'essences, de caractères, de speécificités liées à la pluie, au vent, à la mer, à la montagne….'

He adds a socio-cultural dimension to the definition of Norberg-Schulz: 'Aimons les architectures qui se souviennent des us et des coutumes et qui révèlent les époques et les hommes qui les traversent….'
These two complementing perspectives raised a number of important questions.
What does it mean: "observing and understanding a place"? ... What is "the identity" of a place? How can a thorough investigation of space lead to fundamental understanding of the context? How can a spatial designer work with this 'essential features' of a place? Does this lead to well adapted and sustainable interventions?

In order to understand a place, we have to examine the physical environment but also to the ecological, cultural, social and economic reality. On the other hand there is the atmosphere and the changing moods one experiences when walking through a place, relating to specific material conditions, but also to the history and the dynamics of the inhabitants. Joseph Rykwert describes this as follows: ' appreciated, seen, touched, smelled, penetrated, whether consciously or unconsciously, the city fabric is a tangible representation of that intangible thing, the society that lives in it – and of its aspirations'.

The physical place
Norberg-Schulz is making a distinction between a space and a place. 'Spaces where life occurs are places. A place is a space that has a distinct character. A place is a total phenomenon, that we cannot reduce to any of its properties, without losing its concrete nature out of sight' . Important for Norberg-Schulz when analyzing people using space is the fact of 'dwelling', which for him is 'belonging to a specific place'. To belong to a place means to have an existential foothold. Architecture helps man to dwell. The basic act of architecture is therefore to understand the vocation of the place.
All this needs to be fully understood and internalized before a conscious intervention can take place.

Is this something we can learn from architecture without architects ? In this book Rudofsky considers that 'untutored builders in space and time demonstrate an admirable talent for fitting their building into the natural surroundings. Instead of trying to conquer nature, they welcome the vagaries of climate and the challenge of topography'.
This kind of logic in planning and building has served for centuries in the urban development of western cities, but in one way or another, this knowledge disappeared or became less important. For Norberg-Schulz his 'theory of place' can help to re-understand the context, so that new urban development can be based on this knowledge. He argues that human identity in general depends on growing up in a 'characteristic' environment, that's why it is essential that an architect uses this as the basis for his design. Most modernistic buildings exist according to Norberg-Schulz in a kind of 'nowhere', they are not related to the landscape or to a coherent urban whole. In this context, it is difficult for people to identify or orient themselves. In that sense he suggests that the environmental crisis implies actually a human crisis.

The human place
Dreams, relationships, social contacts, arts, aspirations… All of them are fragile but essential additional elements in the creation of the built environment.
In his Louisiana manifest Jean Nouvel says that a designer should first find out what history and nature have already produced in a specific place. On the one hand, it's about the landscape itself, containing already embedded buildings and the used material, the light, the wind, the trees…but on the other hand it is also about the people who live there, about their ideas, rituals, conflicts and dreams.
In this way, spatial interventions could occur, that deal with 'what is already there', that try to respect the local emotions, that see the 'sediment' of a spot and reveal this, that assume patina, that give the site a new orientation respecting the traces of history, that anticipate on transformations through time, that pay attention to the breath of the place or her pulse, that make the right interpretation of her rhythm, that resonate with a deep mystery namely the soul of the place.
Therefore an architect works from location-based customs, traditions and history, next to the analyses of the topography, the depths of the field, the feeling of the wind, the skies, the earth, the water, the fire, the scents, the trees, the herbs, the flowers, the flies...
Contextual projects have a link with the past and the future, are gritty and organic, direct and infinite, visible and invisible .

Complementarity
Where Norberg-Schulz makes a compelling analysis of natural and man-made places, and associates this with existential needs of man, we see with Jean Nouvel a fragile complementarity to this definition that has to do with the culture on that place. To Norberg- Schulz cities 'grow' out of a place according to an existential need. To Jean Nouvel architecture has to be based on a deep respect for the place and on a true dialogue with the physical and socio cultural context.
Taking into account the spatial and socio-cultural essence of the place can lead to interesting sustainable development and architectural projects. That's why architectural design education should sensitive the students to grasp and understand the complex context before proceeding to design.

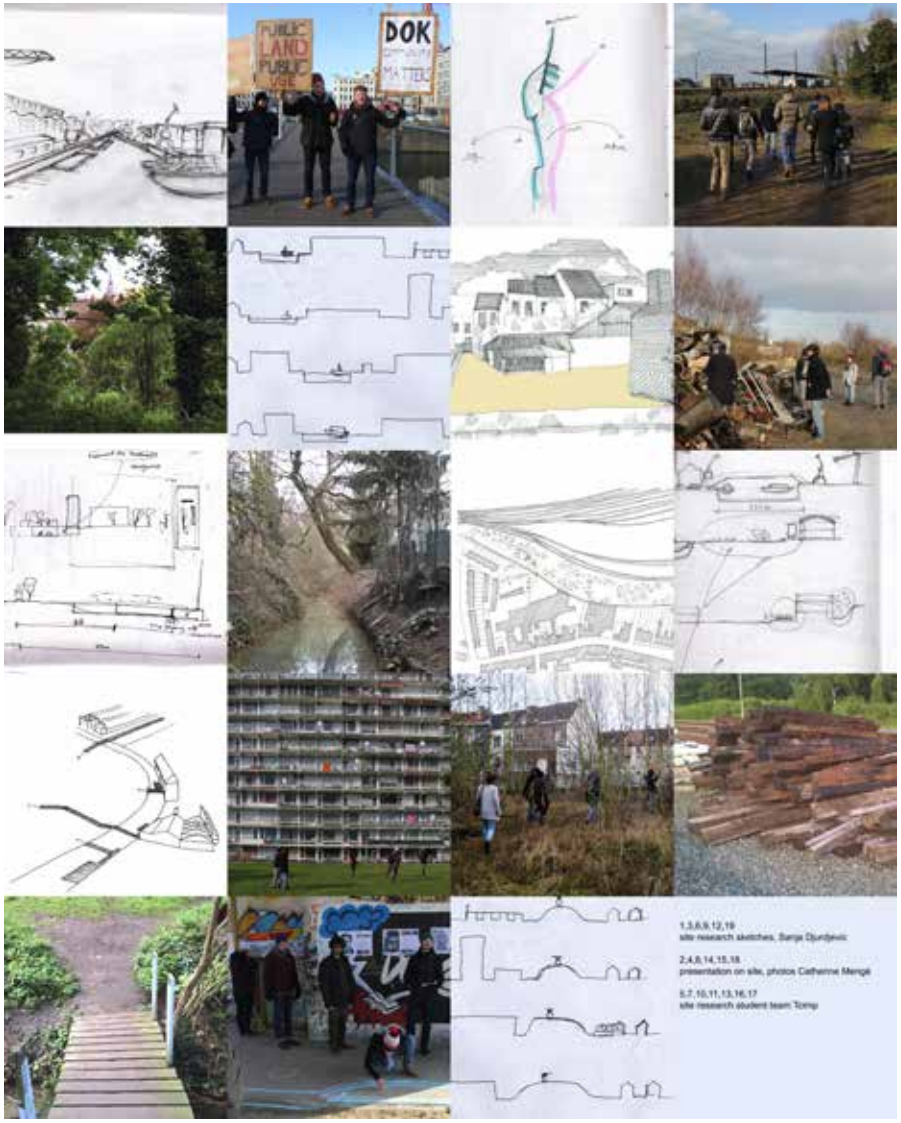
Designstudio Co-simplicity
The intention of the studio 'Co-simplicity' is to learn to design in a sustainable manner by focusing on understanding and reframing the meaning and identity of a site. The designresearch takes into account all the interesting characteristics of the place so that an intense relationship between the context and the design arises. This sensitive interventions can be achieved according to existing spatial and programmatic needs and potentials.
Within this exercise, 'sustainability' is not just about the right use of resources and being commited with climate issues, but also about a sensibility towards the identity of the environment and 'what is already there'. Therefore, the acquisition of a deep understanding of the essence of the place and the development of an architectural intervention that responds to these aspects, is of crucial importance. Students are challenged to explore and understand the potentials and specific spatial, social, cultural…characteristics of the site. Out of this, they can

define their position and attitude and develop a fragile architectural design that is consistent with the findings from the research by design. This attitude can lead to a ‘simple’, ‘clear’ and ‘sustainable’ architectural project.
Against this background we organized the designstudio at the eastside of the city of Ghent, with the intention to train students in acquiring a greater sensitivity for the character of a site and in designing spatial interventions that are specific to the local context.

The Eastside of Ghent – axis from North to South: Old port, Dampoort, river Scheldt
After the demolition of the ramparts in 1876 at the east site of Ghent a large area came free for industrial expansion of the city. Along with new railway infrastructure and port developments the industry developed intensively on this side of town. When in the 20th century the industry moved to the north of the city a lot of 19th century factory sites remained empty. Together with the railway, shunting yard and docks this 19th century brownfields cause a major physical barrier between the city centre and the neighboring municipality Sint-Amandsberg. This complex area, where bronwfields are intertwined with 19th century dense residential areas and where infrastructure forms strong borders, is the research-site for this studio.

Eastern Ghent through ‘sense of place’ glasses?
Three student projects will be outlined briefly : the Vikingtowers, the ‘Green Banana’ and the ‘Parkinglot at the Dendermondse steenweg’. The various design processes are not described in detail, but the projects are witnesses of sensitivity and understanding of the identity of a place.

Students worked in groups (PAL e-teams) exploring the area searching for interesting sites. They were asked to make thorough analyses of these specific places, by undertaking repeated visits on the spot, with a view to get a comprehensive understanding of the place.
Observations and research on site were made during different moments of the day, under different weatherconditions, talking with people living there, wandering around, sketching and photographing the existing urban fabric. At the same time students were studying the geography of the site and the origin of the space by studying old maps and reading literature about the local history, customs and habits. The impact of the geography and the way the space is built is researched with plans, cross-sections and models. Actual use, opportunities and needs are perceived locally but also discovered by studying the vision of the city on this specific place. This sensible design attitude was permanently trained and students went back to the design-site several times. Afterwards they used this knowledge to make balanced design choices respecting the specificity of the place.
It was noticed that this method gave the students the opportunity to get to know very well the identity of a site, leading to remarkable ‘fragile’ and ‘contextual’ proposals that in a way added new or renovated orientation-points in the neighborhood.
Norberg-Schulz wrote about this: ‘to gain an existential foothold man has to be able to orientate himself: he has to know where he is. We understand that human identity is to a high extent a function of places and things, therefore our environment has a spatial structure which facilitates orientation but also that consists of concrete objects of identification’ .



Project Vikingtower

Strolling around in the research area this group was struck by two isolated residential modernistic towers along the Afrika road, close to the old docks and industrial sites. Visiting the site at different times and with observing, photographing and sketching the whole neighborhood, the students got to know the place in a spatial way. With the house keeper the students were allowed to go to the roof top where they had an exceptional view on the city of Ghent.

To understand the social-cultural context some residents were interviewed and the students learned that these towers - although built in the beginning of the seventies without taking into account the context- became through time more than a stack of appartments. They learned to see it as a vertical village where many people know each other and are living together.

This knowledge led to the decision to make a proposol to renew the towers and add interesting meeting places at the groundfloor to strenghten social life. In this way this place could become an interesting livingplace with appartments that meet today's demands on housing but also a place where people have possibilities to meet with each other, thanks to the interesting encounter opportunities created by this project.

Project 'Green banana'

Although the area is a dens 19th century neighborhood, this studentgroup found during their intensive search for interesting places a hidden greenspace on the slope of a railway embankment along the backsite of a row of houses.

Fascinated by this oasis in this residential area they researched the identity of this deserted place. Sketches of trees, a small canal, the backs of houses, views to the urban fabric, all elements of the site were examined in depth.

The knowledge of this place led to extremely delicate designs such as a bridge, a tree house, a path, a restroom ....

All these small spatial interventions provided a real added value for the residents of the small social housing area and adventurous playingground for the children of the neighborhood.

Parkinglot along the road to Dendermonde

A parkinglot without any identity surrounded by characterless big shops and at the backsite of the train station of the Dampoort is the central area studied by another group of students. A path along the railway track stops on the parking lot and does not connect to the railwaystation nearby. These students visited the place dozens of times, looking for the specificity of the place and how it could be enhanced.

This project is about new connections for pedestrians and cyclists and meeting places for people who live there or pass by. The students designed a path along the railway linking this neighborhood to the station. Along this path they developed for children a temporary installation to play soccer and a new coffee house in the old factory is welcoming the visitors. The students were able to do meaningful spatial interventions in a very modest way, thanks to the lessons they learned from the frequent visits to the spot and their willingness to fully understand the site.

Although the three projects are very different, they all have one important element in common: they are based on the specificity of the place. The potentials and weaknesses, visible and invisible are identified, analysed and taken into account in the project. With this fragile interventions the site was strenghten and the students created senstive pleasant living environments for residents and every one that passes by…

Conclusion

Sustainable projects are always anchored to the place where they are built, both socio-cultural and spatial. Taking into account 'what is already there' requires great empathy and understanding of the designer.

Through the research in this eastern part of Ghent the students found out that the identity of a place (genius loci) is a fragile given that should be handled with care. They also understood that an in depth analysis and interpretation of the site can provide insights into the essence of that place: on the one hand it is about spatial and morphological forms, on the other hand it is about social, cultural, political, ecological, economic dynamics that affect the area. The "socio-cultural" in the description refers to a respectful consideration of the place and its inhabitants with the intention to create a durable cohabitation, now and in the future.

By developping a sensitive design attitude that starts from the understanding of the complexity of a site, the next generation of architects will be able to acquire the essential skills to sensitive sustainable architectural projects.

THE ACT OF BUILDING

Laurens Bekemans - BC Architects & Studies

As one of the most complex physical actions a community can undertake, the act of building spreads its tentacles across classes and skillsets, across materials and technologies, across space and time. While the act of building is contextual, it is an essential and timeless part of architecture. Throughout history, form has emanated from the act of building. Moreover, it seems that architecture can only be read and appreciated (or depreciated) through the presence of a subliminal collective narrative which takes form during the act of building into the architectural value of a project. Hence the timely act of building generates the timeless experience of architecture: an oscillation between context and essence, process and result, narrative and form.

With today's society of systemic and increasing complexity, the act of building introduces opportunity or danger with regards to the concept of expulsion (as defined by Saskia Sassen). The transformative and integrative power of the act of building as a communal and complex effort for the rearrangement of flows of money, materials, skills, time, knowledge within today's society, holds a key to reinforcing or disrupting narratives necessary for managing the systemic complexity of society as humanity.

The position of the architect is no longer modern – as the sole author and coordinator of a project; but fluctuates along the tentacles of the act of building into other biospheres and back – out of economic necessity and/or social ideology. By focusing on the act of building instead of more typical concepts of form and space, reflections on architecture are grounded and relevant for contemporary society, while keeping track of timeless architectural value throughout history.

The act of building is one of the most thorough and far-reaching actions which any human can undertake. It is a transformative experience, in which years of effort and preparation and saving culminate in the erection of the building. It is also a social levelling mechanism as almost everyone, regardless from race, nationality, class, undertakes or is involved in the act of building at least once in a lifetime and meets the Other within the act of building.

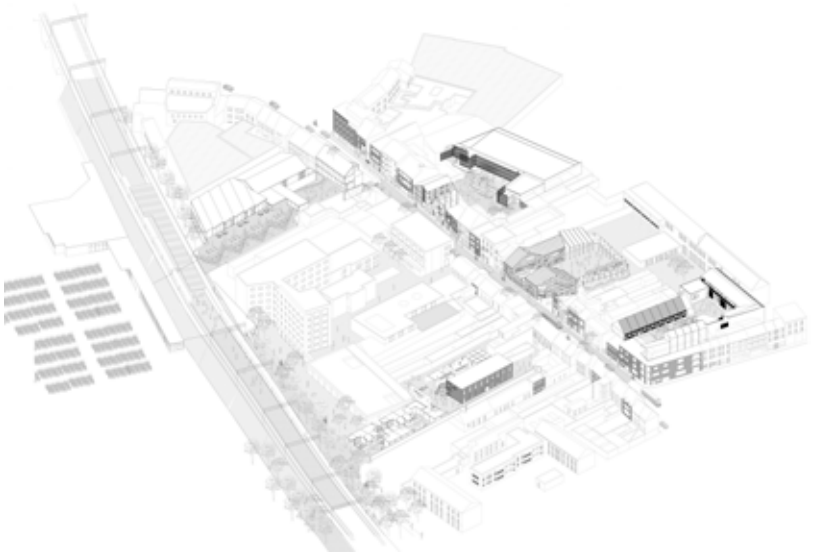
The act of building is above all contextual; as shelter against the elements, it defies digitalization, standardization, robotisation. It is an industriously human activity, always linked to place and people, and its production process always visible to society.

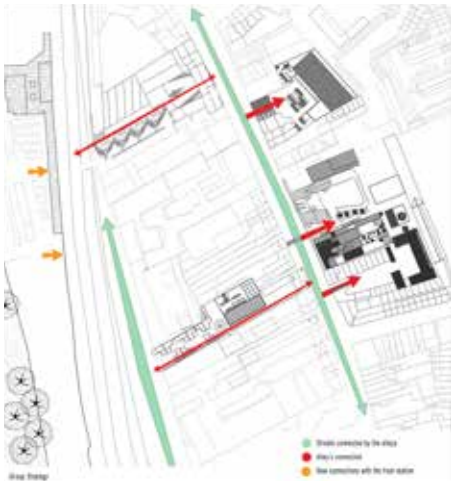
A building project, however small, needs input of all sectors of society (social classes, layers of society); through financing, regulations, policy, conception, design, managing, construction, maintenance, etc… The act of building spreads out its tentacles horizontally and vertically all over societal sectors and layers.

The sheer physical presence of the act of building affects all bodies involved in a direct and unmitigated way. It touches people, it influences the actors and the network in an unavoidable way.

ALLEY-TECTURE

5Line - Catia Martins, Sophie Nieuwbourg, Linh Nhat Nguyen, Oleksii Ananiev & Stefan Frey





The group strategy of 5Line is to focus on how under-used alleys and lane ways can become genuinely thriving places improving their context. It was about enhancing what was already there and letting that inform each intervention. weather it was housing, education, retail, fitness or the station. Dendermondsesteenweg is a street full of diversity in nationalities and program, varying in scale, our interventions aim was to highlight the existing in the street and its possibilities. Each member of the group is responsible for one alley and each alley has its own identity and program, culminating in a masterplan for the street where the abandoned alleys and access ways don't just help the context but improve it significantly. children/educational, commercial, housing, fitness/health and super market/railway access. All the alleys bring many opportunities to the site. Given the proximity to the railway we were also able to create two new connections through these alleys to improve the access from the street to the train station. It was about planning for the now and the future. which means the street no longer works in simple straight line, now it is a network. Each alley is almost like a battle axe site, with urban planning and architecture working together to improve each one through reinvigorating the redundant and capitalising on the time place and culture of the context.

(1) Commercial Alley

Dendermondsesteenweg is an under used alley that will become a connection between the train station of Dampoort and Dampoort itself.

Given the big number of people passing through this connection (underneath the railway), it becomes a great opportunity to improve business, commercial and social activities.

Underused garages are removed, a straight path is created through the entire alley for people to walk straight to the streets but it is surrounded by small steel structure food stands that can vary in many different activities/cultures, and being diverse enough to create all sort of environments among visitors. People will adapt the place, either by simply grabbing some food on their way to work/home or by sitting on the counter, maybe even have a picnic on the floor and change the whole atmosphere of the alley.

Given the fact that an art gallery/book store is right next to this alley but has a brick wall separating them, two new ways in are created between the two alleys and the wall can be a very strong element of connection between them, being painted/modified on the side of the art gallery but remaining brick on the side of the commercial area to maintain the material connection with the brick building that is already there, and is quite a strong element. In the place of the garages hidden by the brick building, a restaurant is created. It takes advantage of its brick façade and its front is made of glass, so the brick stands out. Its roof is accessible and allows people to eat/meet there as well.

In the straight path created through the entire alley there is a tree in the middle, which marks the "decision making point". A person can either keep on walking straight to the next street or turn left (if coming from the station), and enjoy the courtyard, restaurant, a concert, resting spots the alley has to offer.

(2) Housing Alley

Adjacent to the busy Dendermondsesteenweg a small rustic and peaceful co-housing project is settled. The old houses have a typical Flemish rural character and carry the typical "I'm ignoring the street" facades. Due to a lack of initiative the place doesn't respond to the vast

potential that, this partly abandoned place has. The houses are in the form of a cloister/ square where you can find a relatively unattractive garden, to the rear lies a L-shaped former barn, surrounded clutter most of which consist of building materials.

The design form creates a second inner courtyard surrounded by living units where elderly people can live collectively. The project is in relation to the school at the end of the children's alley next to it. As the school has theme based playgrounds, the one bordering the proposed building is the "forest playground" which is tranquil. The relation between children and the elderly is encouraged. The buildings form, is designed to capitalize on this interaction through a buffer that allows direct access at a small scale, allowing the elderly to slip in and out when they choose. The building accommodates a library where children and the elderly can enjoy some reading. In order to reactivate the common garden of the co-housing community, a vegetable garden is imposed, which has dual functions. One is for educational purposes and on the other is about directing circulation to the center, resulting in the houses receiving a larger threshold re-opening their living spaces towards the inner courtyard. With the partly frosted glass, doors and windows opening outwards from the inner axis causes a screen of privacy.

The design of the building plays with this same threshold and the adaptable boundary between public and private and respects the existing structure. The dimension of time is carried through the old structure, which divides the space which has been repurposed in the interior of the units.

(3) Health Alley

This existing lady fitness facilities has already been playing an important role not only for this particular Dendermondsesteenweg street but also for whole area of Dampoort. Especially to meet the demand of large amount of Muslim woman who require the privacy while working out , therefore the existing facade and the front yard of the fitness center is almost entirely closed with industrial facade and car parking. Considering myself in this particular alley as an editor, There are potentials that can be developed and some issues that can be edited.
In the new edited design, there is no place for cars, big front yard will make room for new open space with benches and trees, and offer some value green space which this area clearly needs. A new facility that support to the existing building at the entrance of alley , which narrow down the entrance but increase the invitation to attract people to come in. This building will provide drinks, working out equipments, a place for ladies to "worship".

The facade of the fitness center will be aesthetically edited with the Kengo Kuma inspired facade as a buffer zone from outsider with elevated place for ladies who want to be seen while working out but still remain security thanks to the new facade. Meanwhile, others, especially Muslim woman who require privacy will also have an private area where can't be seen by outsider. Further more a new transitional place bettween the new open space and the fitness central will also be offered to increase the privacy for the ladies as well.

(4) Station/Supermarket Alley

There are two main functions: supermarket (name supposed to be changed) and connection to the Ghent Dampoort station, which take profit from each other. So necessary to realize potential connection to Dendermondsesteenweg required space, that currently owned by supermarket. At the same time a new exit leading to the new Commercial alley become possible. In return supermarket will receive a huge amount of potential customers, which go by to catch a train. Organization of supermarket was totally rethought: using of the first floor, additional floor above storage, relocation and reorganization of storage with new loading route.

The additional functions designated to support the alley include:
- Waiting area for travelers (including book sharing, Wi-Fi, power outlets) and additional ticket office in currently abandoned building;
- Social restaurant, that uses products from the supermarket before expiring date with the purpose of rational usage of food and reducing wastes. To engage a wide range of visitors there will be no fixed prices, visitors pay on base of their solvency and satisfaction.
- Open terrace for travelers, restaurant visitors and all comers.
- Public square is necessary part when take into account narrow sidewalk and amount of people passing by. It will underline importance of this alley and became a new meeting point.
- Office building has a valuable location close to the station and primarily it is a profitable investment for supermarket owner to cover reconstruction expenses. Glass and outstanding facade will be a landmark of the street elevation.

(5) Alley for Children - De Snuit

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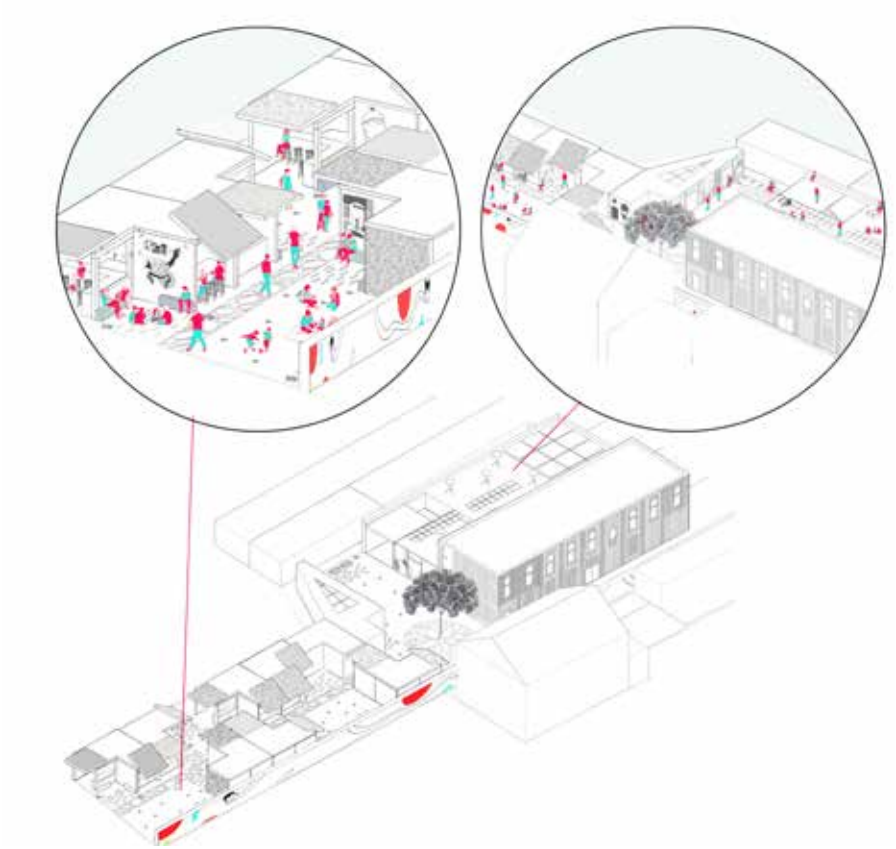
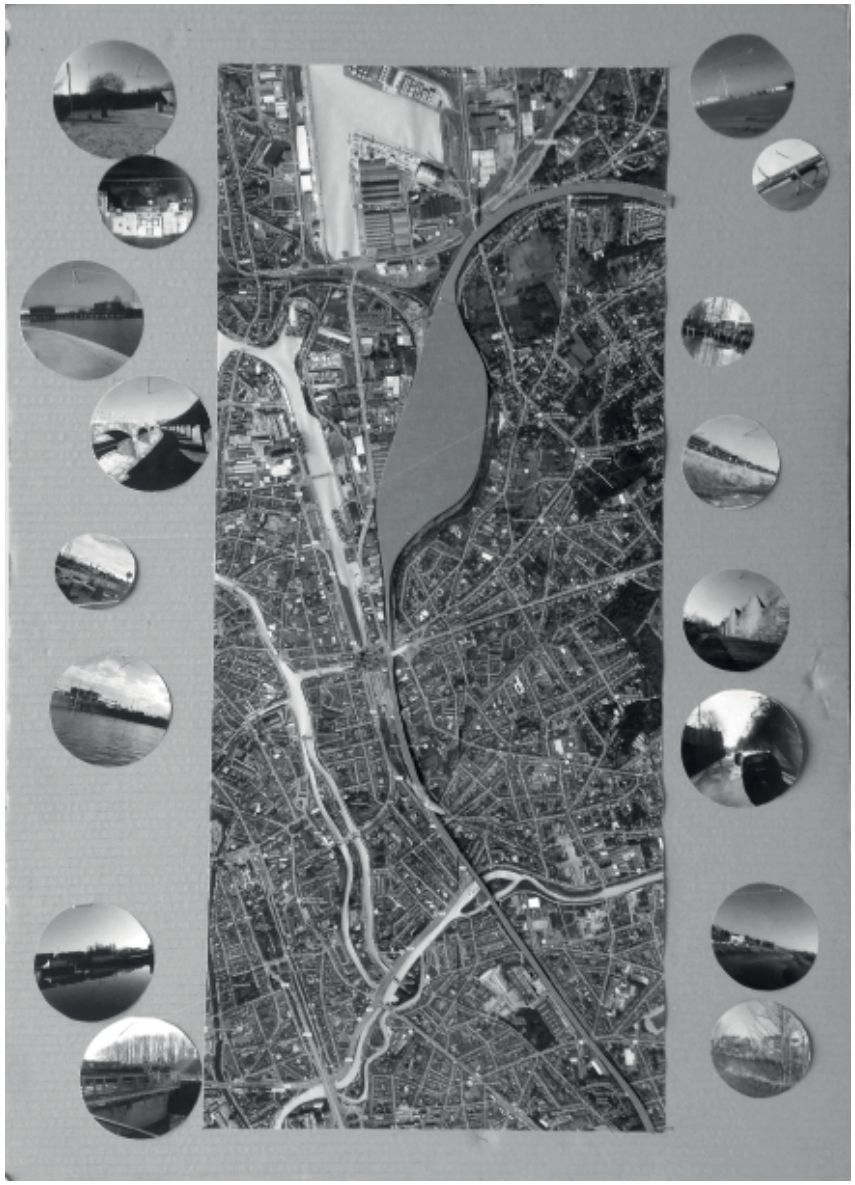


Axonometry - Commercial alley.

Images - Housing alley.

AEDIFICIUM SENSUS

PLAN B - Louis Besner, Ege Baki, Tommaso Bisogno & Ben Delabie



A first encounter with the actual Oudde Dokken site reveals the hidden charm of this not so distant part of Gent. Like many other neglected industrial areas in cities around Europe that are now on the front scene of architectural and creative experiments , the old docks of Gent offers several opportunities for planning authorities and inhabitants. As part of the ciy for centuries, the Oudde Dokken witnessed the great economic trades period of Flanders in the Middle-Ages and later on the industrial revolution of the XIXth century. Dampoort district was at the heart of this economic booming that took Gent to the rank of industrial and artistic capitals of Europe. Its aura faded after the WWII as the port activities moved north, and his inhabitants out of the city. Various industrial activities are still taking place in this area, although most of the building and adjacent plots are now abandoned. SoGent, the planning authority of the city of Gent has launched the Oudde Dokken project fifteen years ago with a masterplan from OMA. The first construction phase started last years, almost ten years later than originaly planned. However, individual initiatives arised way earlier and the few inhabitants and associations present on the site had already started to give a new meaning to the Oude Dokken without waiting for the public authorities to do it.

A view at OMA ‘s masterplan from 2005 annunciates the city’s ambition for higher density and new economical activities in this district. OMA’s strategy to connect perpendicular layers of buildings to the water banks is expressed via largescale white entities, grid planned network of street and public parks and somewhat dubious renderings that all seem unappealing. Few interesting buildings remaining is leading us to believe a Tabula-Rasa approach. Moreover, the Oudde Dokken is a long term project that spans until final completion in 2030. The temporal aspect becomes then crucial. To better understand the impacts of it, we built models of the entire site and realized short time-lapse video clips showing the demolition/construction process. It became clear that the social and economical activites that are now active there will either have to move due to demolition or either be forced to move because of the impacts of the construction sites coming up. We were left with the impression that the project as it is planned doesn’t take the actual situation and the multiple construction steps over the upcoming years.

Strategy

How will people experience the Oudde Dokken before it’s final completion in fifteen years? Asking ourself this question raised problems that turned out to be advantages. By taking advantage of this multi-steps demolition and construction process, we can recover much of the building materials and valuable architectural elements. To reuse elements that bear the history of the docks and to re-implement them into various interventions, some taking place now and some later over the upcoming years, will help to retain the site’s distinctive features and atmosphere. Existing social and economical initiatives might be more encline to stay and remain active on the site. The first step of our strategy was to have a thorough understanding of the time frame in which the entire project takes place by situating the demolished buildings and the years of their demolitions. Producing a timeline showing also the public spaces and the roads transformations made the whole scenario easier to understand as a whole. Design by Research. That is our game plan from the beginning.

We then had a closer look at the buildings to be demolished. What is can be reused and what is worth to be? Certainly not everything, altough we were in a too early stage of our design process to provide an answer to that question. We archive most materials and elements in 8 booklets, each for one building to be demolished. These archives laid the basis of the next design steps.

Besides investigating quantitative aspects our archive research also describes current demolition phases with particular attention to their economical, social and environmental impacts. A special emphasis is placed on the question of how to reuse these building materials. Not all materials have to be reused through interventions in a pragmatic way, that would lead to dogmatic and overly-architectural designs. The reused elements are selected because of their inherent qualities such as their technical, historical and pratical aspects. A large amount of archived materials and a relatively important site are confusing. Working within a long timeframe has proven its limitations. We take this constraint as part of our design process. Act now with what is available is our guideline.

Between 2016-2018, the first construction site will take place south of the DOK building. Two parks along he water banks and a bicycle bridge will be delivered by 2018. The Oude Minaars park, the biggest one of the two, was designed by West8 Architecten. We use this park as our first case study. Firstly, two buildings are going to be demolished on that site within the next year. Immediate interventions on this site will avoid transportation and storage of the recovered elements and materials. Secondly, the design of the future Oude Minaars will play a central role as the first public space to be completed in the entire project site. As shown by the winning entry images, it lacks any connection with the existing context of the docks, do not offer various possibilities of uses and fails to connect the first completed phase with the second phase up North. Implementing reused elements on this park doesn't aim to display a collection of artifacts. Interventions results from a need in the original proposal and will be built at differents steps throughout the next three years. Avaibility of the materials and progress status of the construction site are the two determining factors. Over the years more materials will become available and new plots will be under construction. Following the example of the Oudde Minaars park case study, this methodology is applied to the next phases of the project. We acknowledge the current master plan and the chosen design proposals. The interventions occur throughout these future projects to strenghten and enhance their status as social activators.

Boilers banks.

Electricity tower to Roof shelter.

Electricity tower as a landmark.

Pergolas.

Kiosk.

VIKING TOWERS

Common Ground - Dimitrios Triantafyllou, Jolien Van der Eecken, Rebecca Silva,
Sanja Djurdjevic & Francesca Cremona

The site of the Viking towers (constituted by the Sweden and Finland apartment blocks) was chosen for its complexity of issues and for its unique situation of 800 people, ranging 31 nationalities and a multitude of languages and cultures, living in the same building blocks only seeing the city of Ghent from a distance.
The existing site possesses the conceptual form of an island, separated from land (the city), and with its own specific environment and conditions. The “island “ is only inhabited and used by its 800 or so residents, with no retail facilities other than a pharmacy and a closed down furniture shop, facing the main road, Afrikalaan, the only connection to the city. The park enclosed on two sides by the Sweden and the Finland building and by the railways and an industrial building on the other two, constitutes the only shared social space.
The position taken for this project revolves around the place in front of the site, by the road to the West, which will be considered as a public area to share, and the other revolves around the park to the East side, shared only by the current residents. The site has then a public life towards the outside, and an inner life in the buildings and between the inhabitants, this is the Common Ground.
In this common ground 5 specific and individual common grounds were identified: the parking and above ex retail building, the Sweden building ground floor, the Sweden’s apartments, its rooftop, and finally the Finland apartments.
In order to develop a coherent and integrated project, four parameters were implemented as a group design strategy: environmental, social, cultural and economical aspects. All these elements were tackled differently within each of the individual projects and resulted in a complementary approach between the designs.
Environmental Parameter: the analyzed performance of the building is the first element to be improved, both for energy consumption and for well-being aspects of the building and the outdoor spaces.

Cultural Parameter: the site includesa lot of nationalities resulting into cultural differences, which from an issue can be a way to bring people together and improve interaction.

Economical Parameter: many residents of the building are unemployed or with some financial difficulties, there is also a lack of any facilities and services for the people, who have to travel to the city to be able to have them.

Social Parameter: social interaction between neighbors or between the two buildings is absent, there is also a physical lack of space where to meet and have social activities for such a diverse neighborhood.

Sportpark
(1) New connection to Finland building
The new designed front and ground floor creates a new access to the Finland building.
Which has no clear front or back facade because of this site position. The new access is bringing the ground floor of the two buildings more together.

(2) Connection with children garden
The front space is related to the ground floor functions. The new children's garden has a play area in front and a waiting space for parents, the protected zone to play is created by the addition of a bench.

(3) Connection with the street
By getting rid of the existing volume in front, a new relation to the street life arises. The front space has now three readable entrances and offers a place to interact and creates common ground. Common ground that is open for public to use, the sportfields, to have a drink or to have a new meeting point at the weekly market stall.

(4) Connection with shops and workspaces
Next to most the most used passage way of the two buildings shops are created on the ground floor. To accommodate the shop in an open area in front can be appropriated to consume, to meet and gather together.

The front space is created from the existing structure and roof of the building that was standing in front. The existing volume was blocking any connection. By adapting the roof a sequence of spaces is created by open and covered spaces. Underneath the new roof volumes are introduced such as the sport-cafe and bike repair shop. They accommodate the sport fields, which creates new connection with existing garage.

Groundfloor as threshold
With new common ground interventions ground floor becomes a threshold between public area related tot he city and common garden in the back. Combining common and public/ working spaces project creates surface for different activities of people of the neighbourhood. By introducing new movements in the ground floor and basement, new closed and open spaces are created as surfaces for different appropriations of space.

With common strategy in mind, this project refers to social and economical aspect of improving the neighbourhood.

On social level, new connections from the public park to the common park create new meeting places. Accessibility is also improved on basement level where new entrances are provided. Spaces oriented to the common park are planned as common spaces with functions needed for people of the neighbourhood, cafeteria, day-care, workshop renting space and mayor office.

New working areas are placed on the spot where two towers meet and in relationship to the sport park. In order to maintain new sport facilities in public park, administration office is places on ground floor. Connection with sport activities is made also on basement level where showers, toilets and lockers are placed.

Project is using existing structure as a background for new spaces. New glass pivoting

panels are working as a tool for creation and interaction between spaces. They also provide visual connection from entrance area to the garden and allow social control.

Sweden building
The Sweden Building is a tower built in 1975 in front of the long Afrikalaan street in the industrial area of Ghent. It is consisted by 18 floors, 210 apartments and around 700 inhabitants. The project focuses mostly in upgrading the living conditions of the inhabitants, offer them new recreational spaces and take advantage of the potentials that the existing situation is giving us.

After the first reading and analysis of the building, the new interventions focus mostly in three wick points of the Sweden Building.

Firstly, each floor has 12 apartments which are almost identical and vary between 70m2 up to 85m2. This fact, makes a tower that hosts only specific types a of families, which is a mainly a 3-member family. Further more, Sweden building has big and long balconies in every apartment, although, they are very slender and around 1.2m wide. that turns the balconies in a non accessible space and prevent people from using them. Thirdly, even if the tower is only 15 wide there is no connection of the two sides. Each apartment faces the east or the west, but never both. Also, the organisation of the fixed furniture is in that way that doesn't allow the natural light to penetrate even the 7 meters of the depth of each living space.

The first intervention, is related with the size of the apartments. New typologies are introduced in order to welcome more people, different ages and more diverse family types. The redesigned plan of a typical floor includes 4 different typologies which vary from 35m2 up to 110m2. This will create a more social environment where people of different age groups, interact and live together.

Secondly, a new element in introduced in every apartment. The Black-Frame Box is the a space which works in two ways. During winter, the box closes and creates a warm livable winter garden, as an extension of the living room. Diverse uses can be host there and inhabitants have a new recreational space in their shelter. On the other hand, during summer, this box turns into a totally open volume, which now plays the role of the intermediate link between the apartment and the city of Ghent.

Finally, the third and most crucial intervention is the reformation of the whole plan of a typical floor. All the fixed elements (wardrobes, kitchens, stable furnitures etc.) are now redirected vertically for two reasons. Firstly, it will allow the natural light to penetrate deeper in the apartments and make some secondary spaces brighter and more livable. Secondly, this gesture will connect easier and more directly the two main facades of the Sweden Building. Now the enormous solid Tower turns into a transparent screen that is not trapped in the existing strict outline, but extends out of it and tries to touch the city.

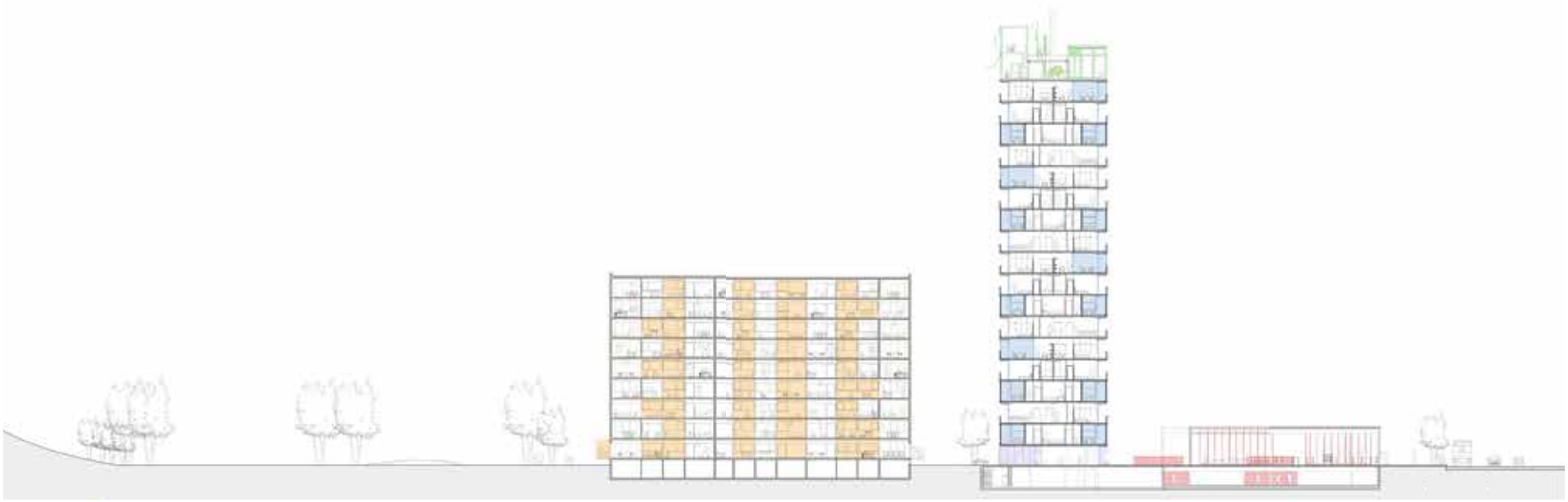
Sweden rooftop
A potential place to enjoy a beautiful view over Gent. At the moment the inhabitants does not have access to the roof, only Frank, the mayor, has the keys to enter and the phone company BASE, who use space for their antennas.
When you enter the building you can hear an annoying noisy loud sound. It's the wind noise sound which comes through the chimneys on the rooftop.

With the four parameters we decide in our group together, the „dynamics of renovation", the existing situation is improved in terms of economic, social, ecological, and environmental reasons.
The space that is rented to BASE or other companies will get money to share the bills for the elevator. There is new insulation on the rooftop to lower the heating costs. New design of the chimneys is taking care of the noise. There are plants which reduce the heat and clean the air. And different sizes of common areas for the different inhabitants should lead to more interaction between them. For example, they can playpétanque together.

The roof is transformed to an inner roof garden for the inhabitants to spend time outside and enjoy the view over Ghent. Without being seen by the 900 people of the two buildings, the experience is another than they might have in the garden on the ground. The phone company now not only uses space for their antennas, they also use the closed volumes as a workplace. Two work-spaces are offices in different sizes, which are private for the company. The third closed space is a common area to have meetings and breaks.

During holidays and weekends, the common area is used by the inhabitants as a common ground. For example, to celebrate a birthday.

Scale model



Crosssection through both towers

VIKING TOWERS INFO

	SWEDEN BUILDING	FINLAND BUILDING	
adress	Africalaan, Gent	Africalaan, Gent	Africalaan, Gent
year	1975.	1985.	1975-1985.
apartments	210	72	282
inhabitants	≈ 700 people	≈ 200 people	≈ 900 people
			31 nationalities

COMMON GROUND PARAMETERS

-starting up new neighbourhood-

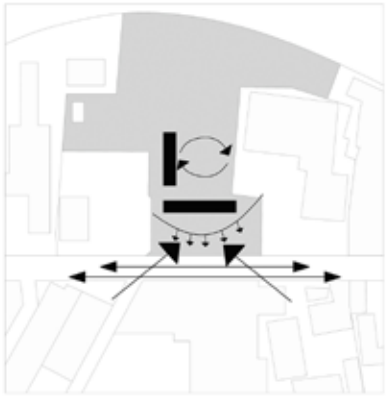
ECONOMICAL

SOCIAL

CULTURAL

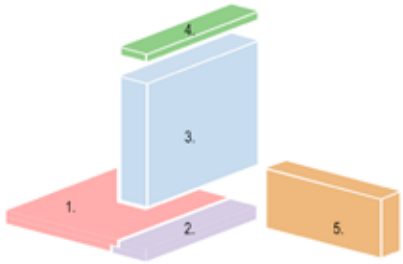
ENVIRONMENTAL

TOWER-CITY RELATIONSHIP

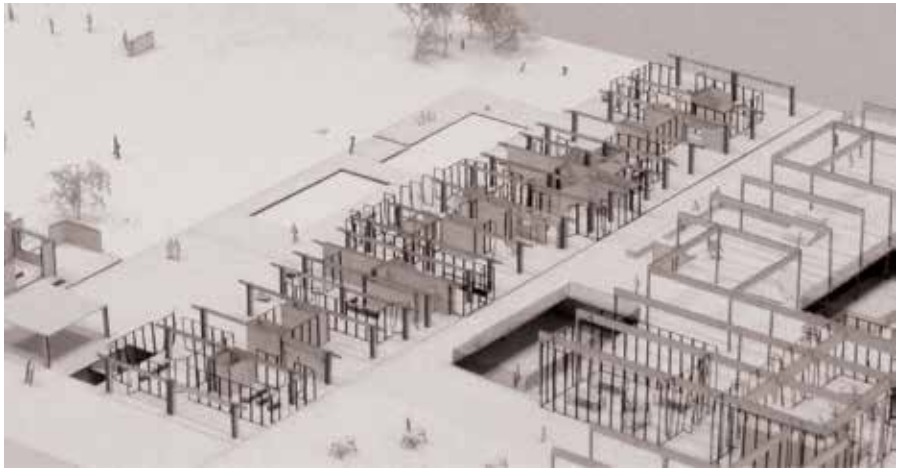


COMMON GROUNDS

1.Sport park 2.Ground floor 3.Sweden Building 4.Roof top 5. Finland Building



Infographics



Model pictures

GUEST MARINA

Jens Rye Svensson

As a result of the group mapping and individual analysis of the area, the group chose a site on the west side of the Handelsdok. The site we chose is a part of the OMA Masterplan around the Handelsdok. The site is worn, unrestored, and still has a strong presence of the industrial past. The strongest impression on the site was the attraction of water in an industrial environment. Maintaining the identity and its industrial ornamentation was crucial, when developing the site. As a part of the analysis I made a, water's edge analysis, that looked at people's connection and attraction to the water at different areas in Gent. The edge at the site, combined with the industrial presence, was something that was unique to the site and could offer a new attraction and waterside in Gent. The edge had to offer a haptic experience of the site not only of the water, but also the industrial memorabilia and the combination between the water and the industrial edge. The edge was fascinating the fascinating element, designed to last in the harshest environments; it is a thick concrete slab with solid iron anchor points and ladders molded into the concrete. This solid edge is the final threshold towards the water in the in the Handelsdok.

Existing refurbished edge

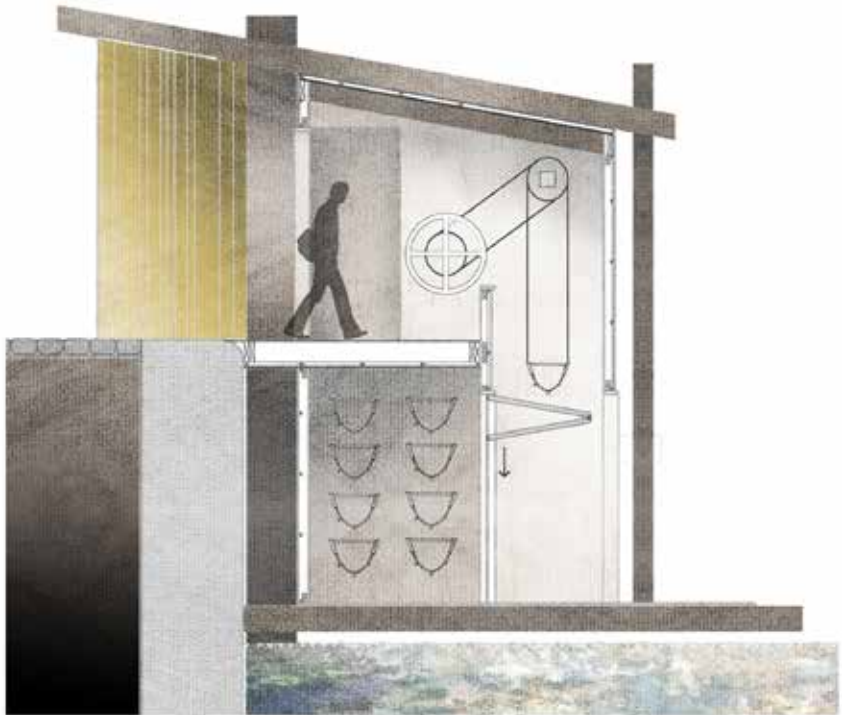
The design project became a reaction to the refurbished edge on the other side of the dock. (east side of the dok) The new edge offer a pleasant walk between the fabric of the old edge, and the water in the Dok. It also fulfills needed functions and services for the houseboats/ living barges in the Handelsdok.

Brief

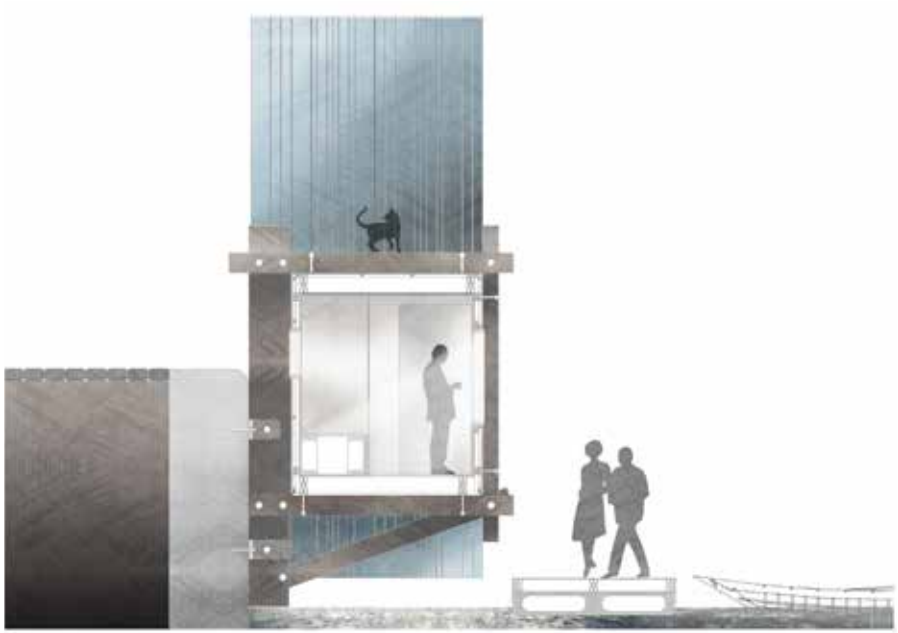
In the OMA masterplan there was proposed a marina in the old timber area of the Dok. This plan was never realized so changed that function into an guest harbor and moved it to the west side of the Handelsdok. The brief I made was simple; it included a common kitchen-dining space, shower/bathrooms, kayak pavilion, and a guard/service tower for the visiting boats.

Design approach

The aim with the new Marina was to meet the existing unharmed industrial edge with an analytic and sensitive approach, treating the edge as a historical monument. The architectural interventions focus on strengthening and to give a new focus on the industrial ornaments and scars of the past. The interaction between industrial materiality, objects, and the public would strengthen the cultural elements on the site. Industrial environments near water are often not open to the public and in this circumstance there was an opportunity to create a haptic experience out of these elements. The sensitive and research based construction makes the project sustainable. Everything from the construction to the colours of the buildings, traces back to the surroundings and the industrial heritage on the site. Cultural sustainability, to preserve, protect and inform about the industrial past through a haptic journey along the water gives this project the cultural sustainability that is lost on many of the refurbished water edges in Gent.



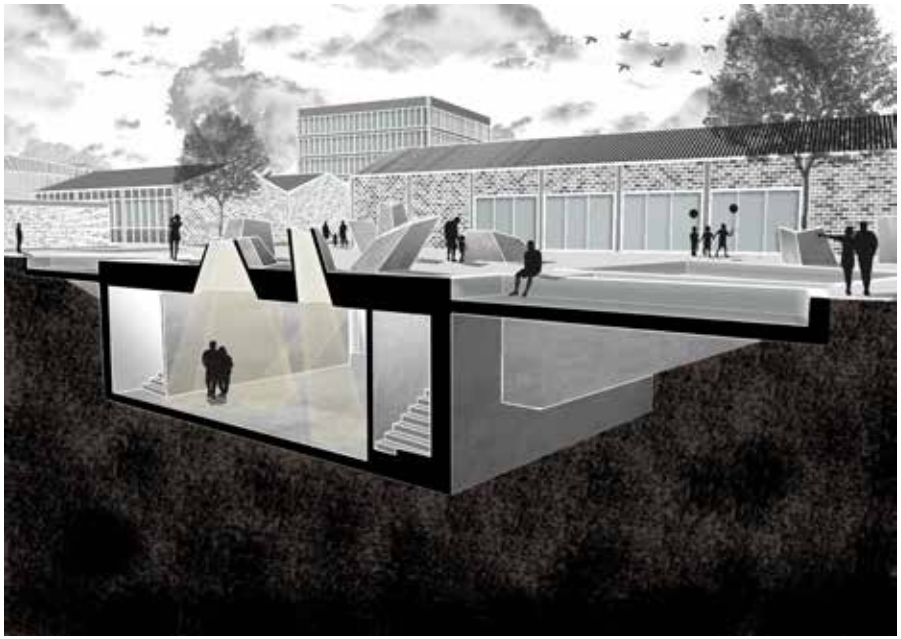
Atmospheric section



Atmospheric section/visualisation

The Sacred secret

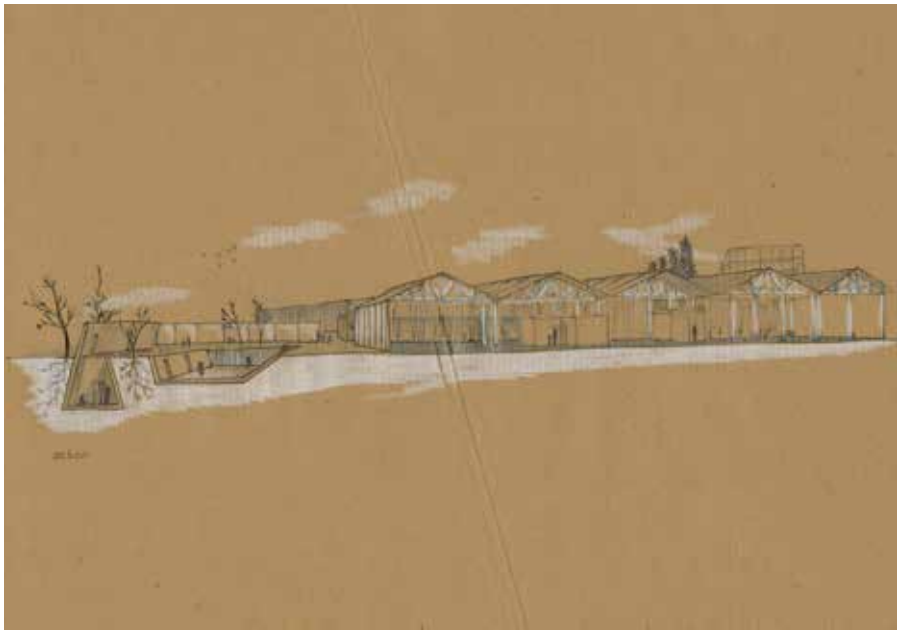
Laura Parmentier



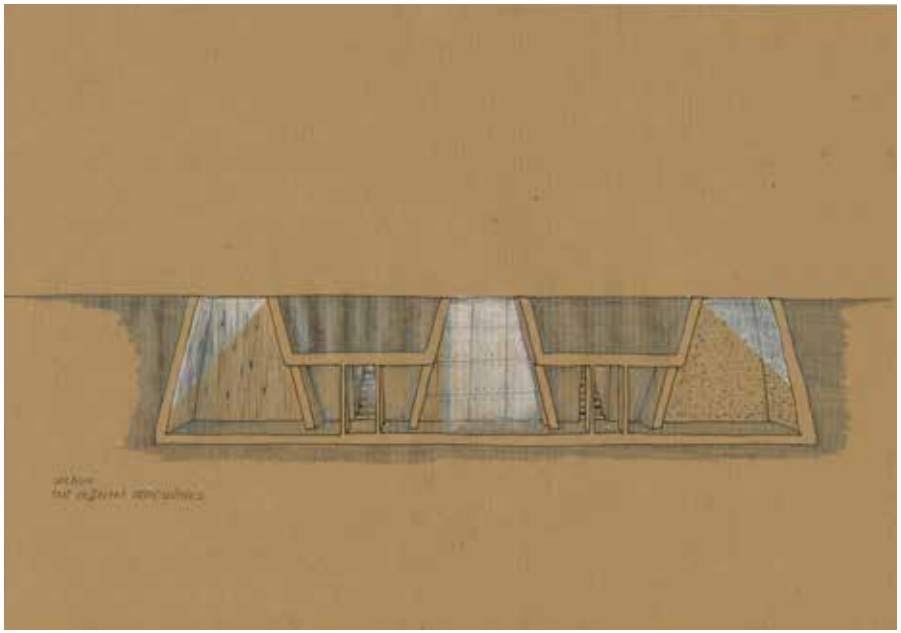
The project consists of two totally different parts and functions combined in the industrial site of Dampoort near the old docks.

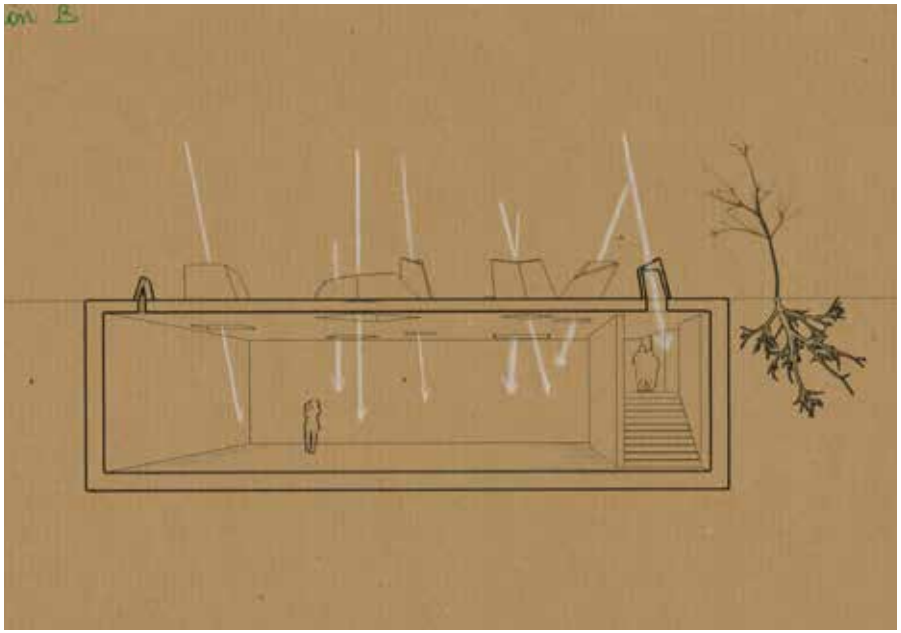
(1) Introvert Church
The African community in Ghent used to to gather in the small office space of the cardealer to have their church services. This way a ambiguity is created of having several acitvities but non visible to the people passing by. The new project creates a space for religious functions and is placed underground in order to create the hidden aspect as before. The introspective functions of the church are related to the industrial buildings around as they also protect their activities keeping it inside and hidden to the world.

(2) Extrovert Square
On top of the church a social square is created to gather people from the street and the strip. The skylights of the underlying religious space are exposed and trigger the drivers on the street to stop in this former zone of transition. The pedestrians of the strip are attracted by small visible parts. As they get closer, more of the square is visible.
The cones relate to the extrovert shape of the factories. The chimney as the most important symbol of industry is translated to these skylight cones on the square.



Project sketches - context





Project sketches - light

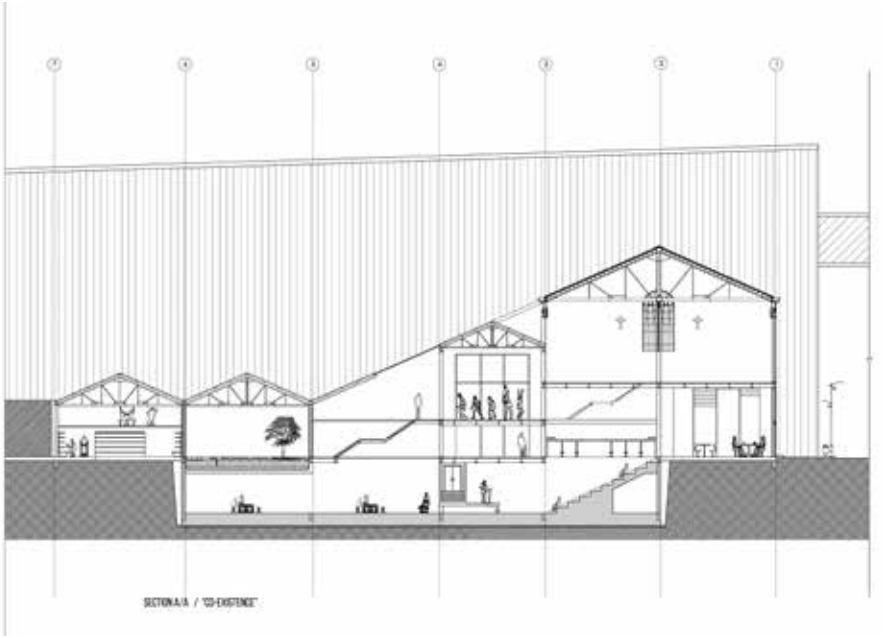
CULT CLUB

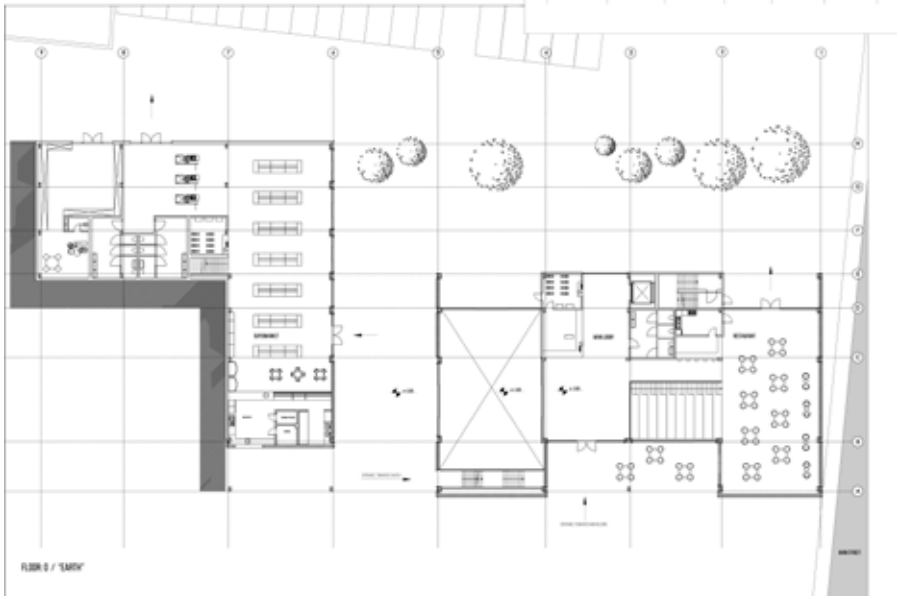
Tarek Waked

"Beau comme la rencontre fortuite d'un parapluie et d'une machine à coudre sur une table de dissection" – Isidore Ducasse, dit comte de lautréamont

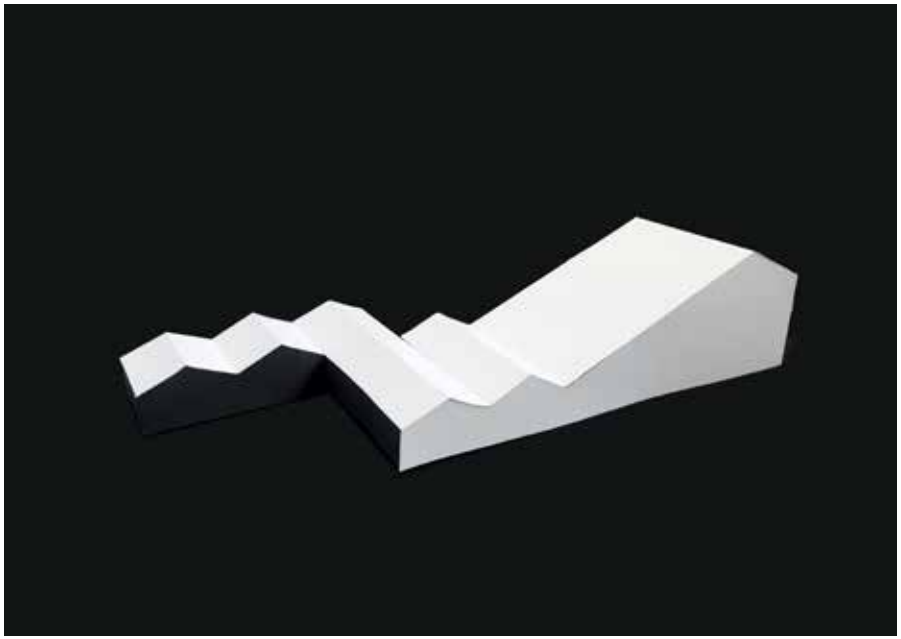
In an area where a church is lodged next to a nightclub facing a car dealer, a conventional praying space does not cut it. Cult Club is a proposal that is focused around the idea of cult, surrealism, fetish and desires. It addresses seven kinds of needs (just like the seven sins and virtues): supermarket, nightclub, production area, auditorium, restaurant, gym and a church; and aims to confront all these activities behind seemingly regular shapes. What is seen from the main road – the church¬ – hides behind it a series of events that a visitor will confront to arrive to the ultimate destination. The prayer will go over 'hell' (an homage to the metropolis and its underground of workers, who run the machinery which keeps the above ground utopian world functioning / production area), passing by purgatory (an intermediary state where people are at the ultimate state of their physical being / gym) and arriving to heaven (church or meditation space).

Due to the location of the project and the desired short timing for construction, conventional construction techniques seem unattainable, therefor a steel structure building is designed with an industrial sensibility, serving as an homage to the standing structures from the early 20th-century typical for the area. The underground levels of the building are reinforced concrete while the upper levels are established as steel structure. Composite structure is left visible on purpose, without using plaster, paint or any cladding material inside as well as outside. The building is designed with intentional flexibility, where everything is prone to change and nothing stays the same. The complex also acts as a buffer between 'de strip' and the green courtyard lodged within it, designed as a green haven for all functions within the building itself and its neighbours.





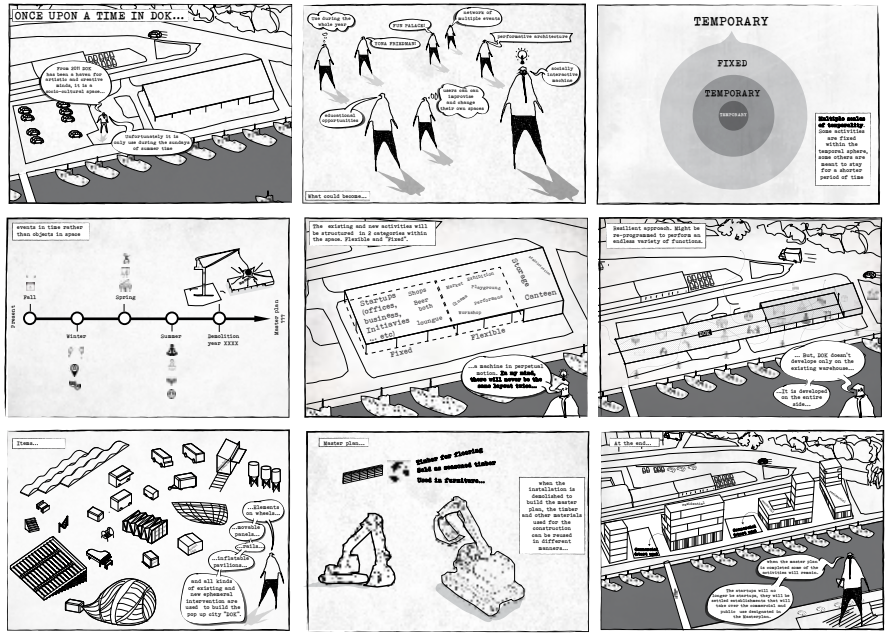
Section and floorplan



Stylised model

DOK

David Florez Rodriguez

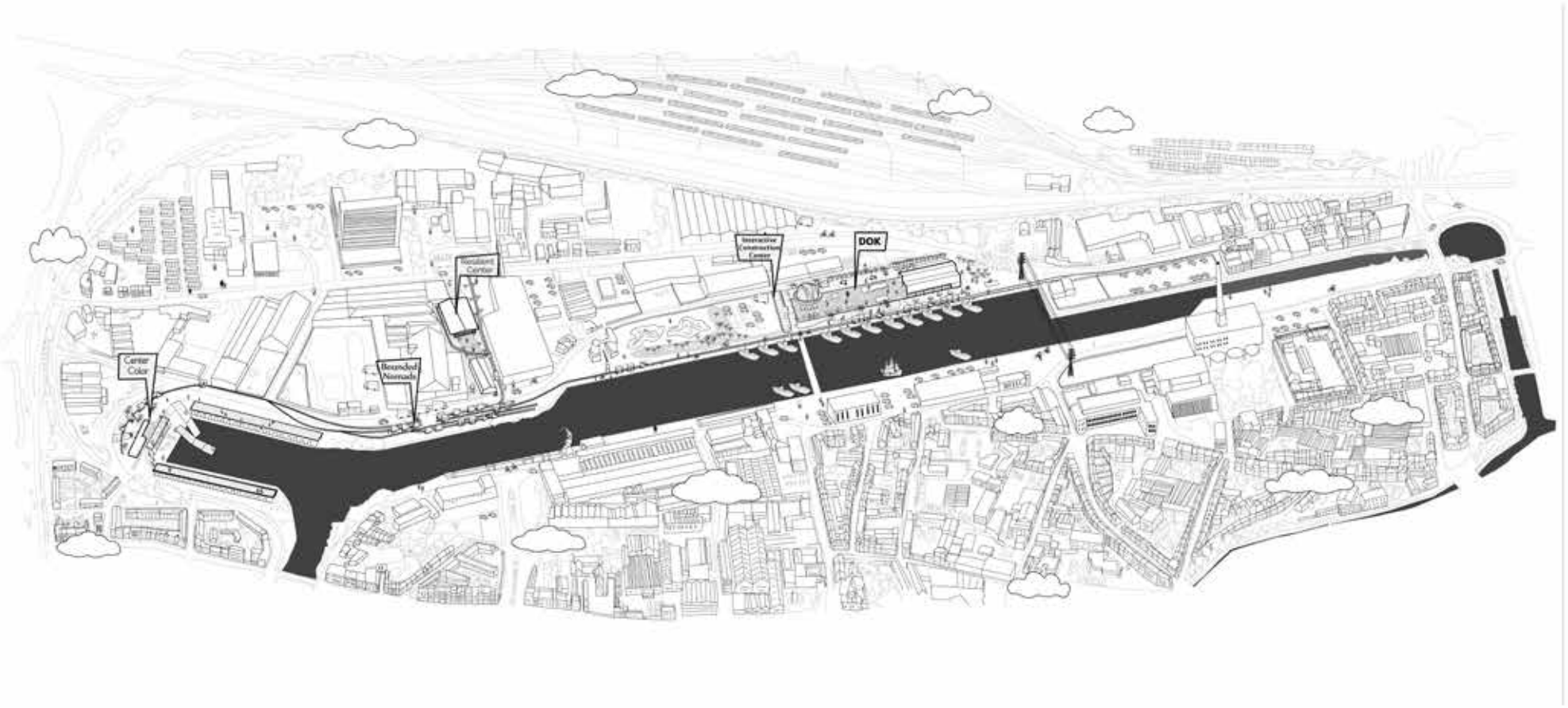


DOK is socio-cultural space that since 2011 has been a unique haven for artistic and creative minds. Unfortunately, it is active solely during the summer. In fact, most of the activities take place only on Sundays. During the rest of the year DOK becomes an abandoned warehouse, thus wasting the potential of the place. DOK will presumably be demolished in the next months. However, it is not clear how long the building will stay, because this claim has been made several times last years and no action has been taken.

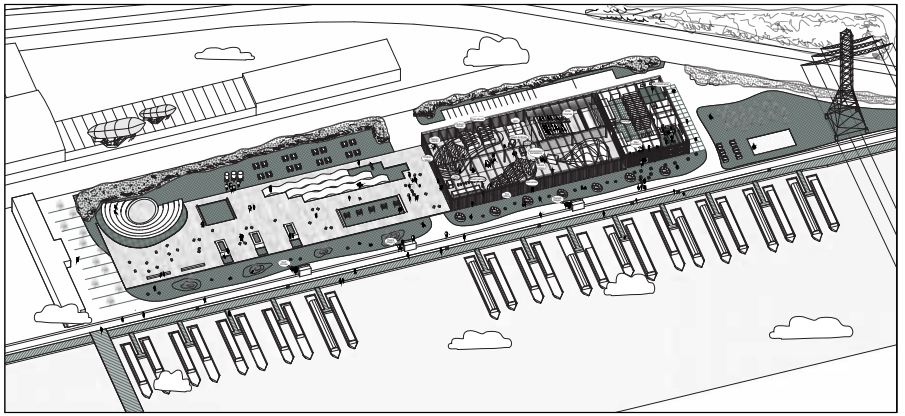
The concept for the intervention is heavily influenced by the unconventional ideas of Cedric Price`s Fun Palace and Archigram´s Instant City. The design approach acknowledges that time is a critical element of architecture. It is not possible for an architect to accurately predict the uses and changes over time in the public space. Therefore, it is important to accept the impossibility of a fixed planning and instead design and build with a degree, allowing uncertainties in the program. Thus, the project follows a flexible script rather than a rigid blueprint. Consequently, the intervention aims to provide a wide range program that can adapt in time. Furthermore, it will incorporate and upgrade existing bottom-up initiatives to preserve the identity of the place. The variety of activities cannot be completely forecast and the architectural elements have to be capable of changes, renewal and destruction. Hence, DOK becomes an urban play where people are the performers and space is the stage.

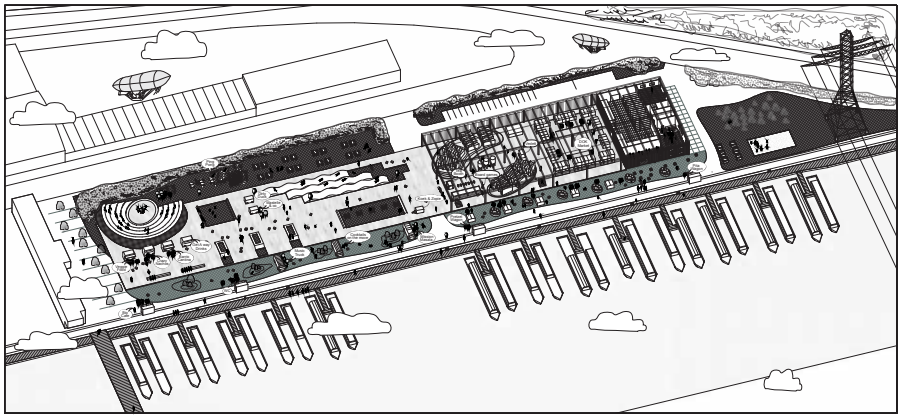
The architectural solutions have to be minimal, flexible and temporary. The first step is to acknowledge that the current initiatives take place on the whole site and not only under the roof of the existing warehouse. This is why a wooden floor is added extending on the whole length of the site, from the interior of the warehouse to the limit of the parcel, creating a public square. This square becomes the main axis of the project. It is and artificial landscape that separate the ephemeral elements that will add life to DOK from the moisture and dampness of the soil. It is a simple, effective and elegant gesture that instantly upgrades and gives proper infrastructure to the activities that will develop on the site. The second step is to structure, organize and upgrade the existing initiatives that take place in DOK. Start-ups and kick-starters will be supported during the entire lifespan of the project. If the start-ups manage to succeed, they will remain after the building is demolished and will adapt into the commercial and business zones designated in the decided master plan for the site. The final step is to add complexity in to the program, adapting new activities and events, letting life develop naturally on the site as people appropriate the space. It is a resilient and experimental methodology that fits perfectly in the contextual framework of the site.

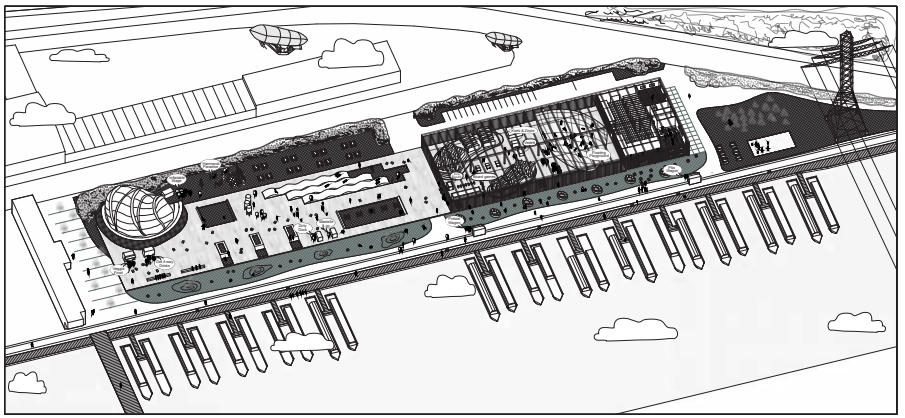
DOK is a part of the group strategy “POP-UP” city, where the aim is to respond to a temporal and spatial gap created by the delay of the execution of the master plan of Oude Dokken, proposed by OMA. DOK works together with other projects of the “POP-UP” city. For instance, DOK is aimed and supported by the “Bounded nomads” and after the structure is demolished, the materials will be recycled and reuse using the “Resilient design center”.



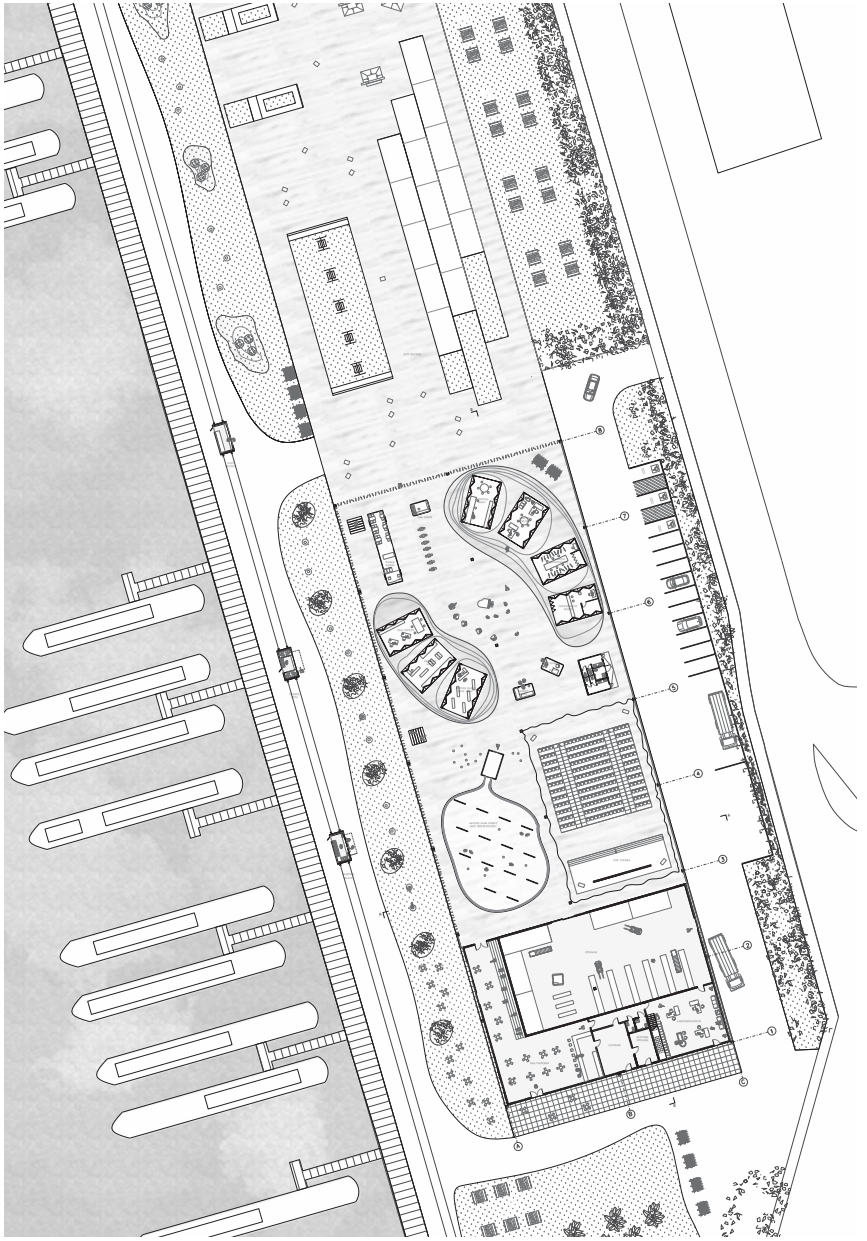
Overview drawing







Seasonal timelapse



Floorplan

BOUNDED NOMADS

Margot Scheyving

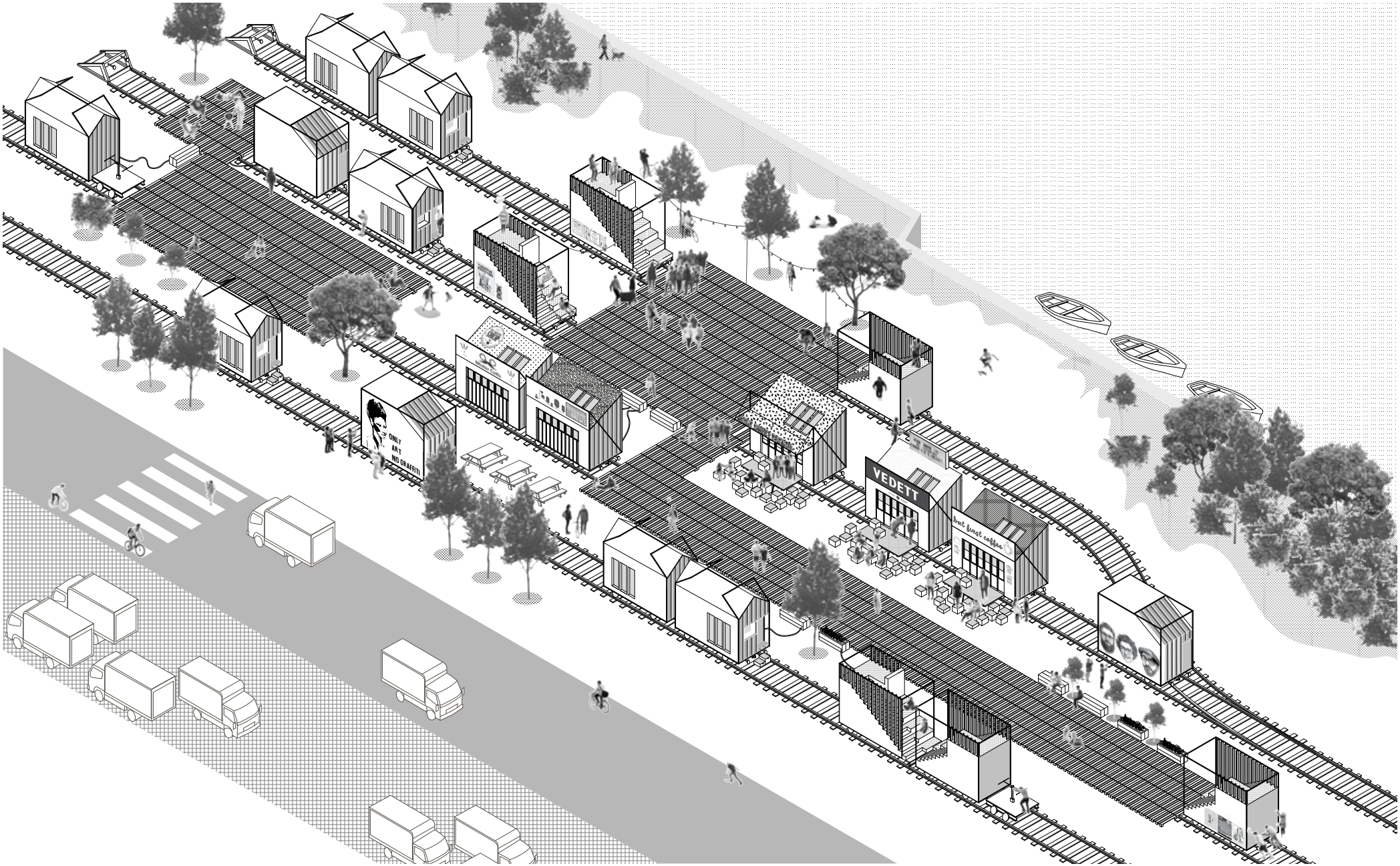
Bounded Nomads can bee seen a opportunity to move along the forgotten rails of the old industry that used to be around Handelsdok, it an opportunitiy to strengthen and complement the other interventions of The Office along the rails or other future interventions, an opportunitiy to both bring people together as to give them to opportunity to isolate themselves from the world around, an opportunitiy to be flexible and creative.

(1) Rentable living nomad
Movable walls, foldable bed, walls filled with storage,... Everything about this Nomand is designed to be as flexible as possible. When cooking or dressing one can reorganise the unit to has as much space as needed. In this way the user of the Rentable Living Nomad can get the best out of a small room. One can push the walls themselves forward with the aid of 4 wheels, above and underneath, which makes it very easy to move them.

(2) Tribune + Sanitary
Two functions are combined in this Nomad: as an additional restroom to the Rentable Living Nomads or public toilet and as sitting stair, tribune, podium,... When one adds an extra projecting screen, an outdoor cinema can be created. The Nomad gets his water and electricity when connected to an external facilities station, while the toilet is a compost toilet. This way the toilet can be used any time, even when not connected with a station.

(3) Food trucks & Micro brewery
Food trucks, pop-up bars, pop-up stores,... are very hot items nowadays. They bring people together for a couple of days or weeks, create small festivals, mix cultures and fit perfectly within the theme of the 'Pop-Up City'. With these temporary Nomads, one could create his own temporary firm, whether it is to launch a food truck, a micro brewery, a barbershop, a temporary clothing store, a fruit market, and so on... The possibilities are endless.

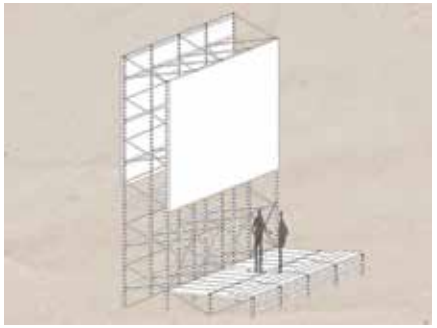
(4) Artist workspace, musice studio, study room, library
This place is in particular designed for artists, students,... to isolate and create. As the room can have different interpretation, also the outside can be used for spraying graffiti, to put up posters for events etc.

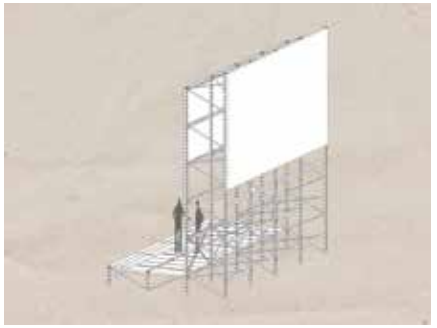


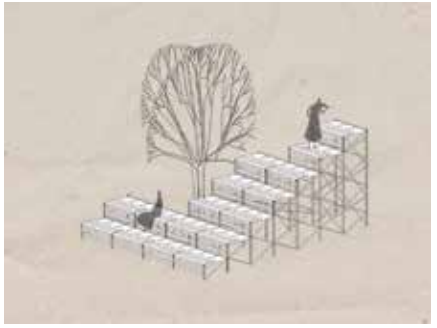
Configuration and scenario.

R-LANE

Hervé Beel







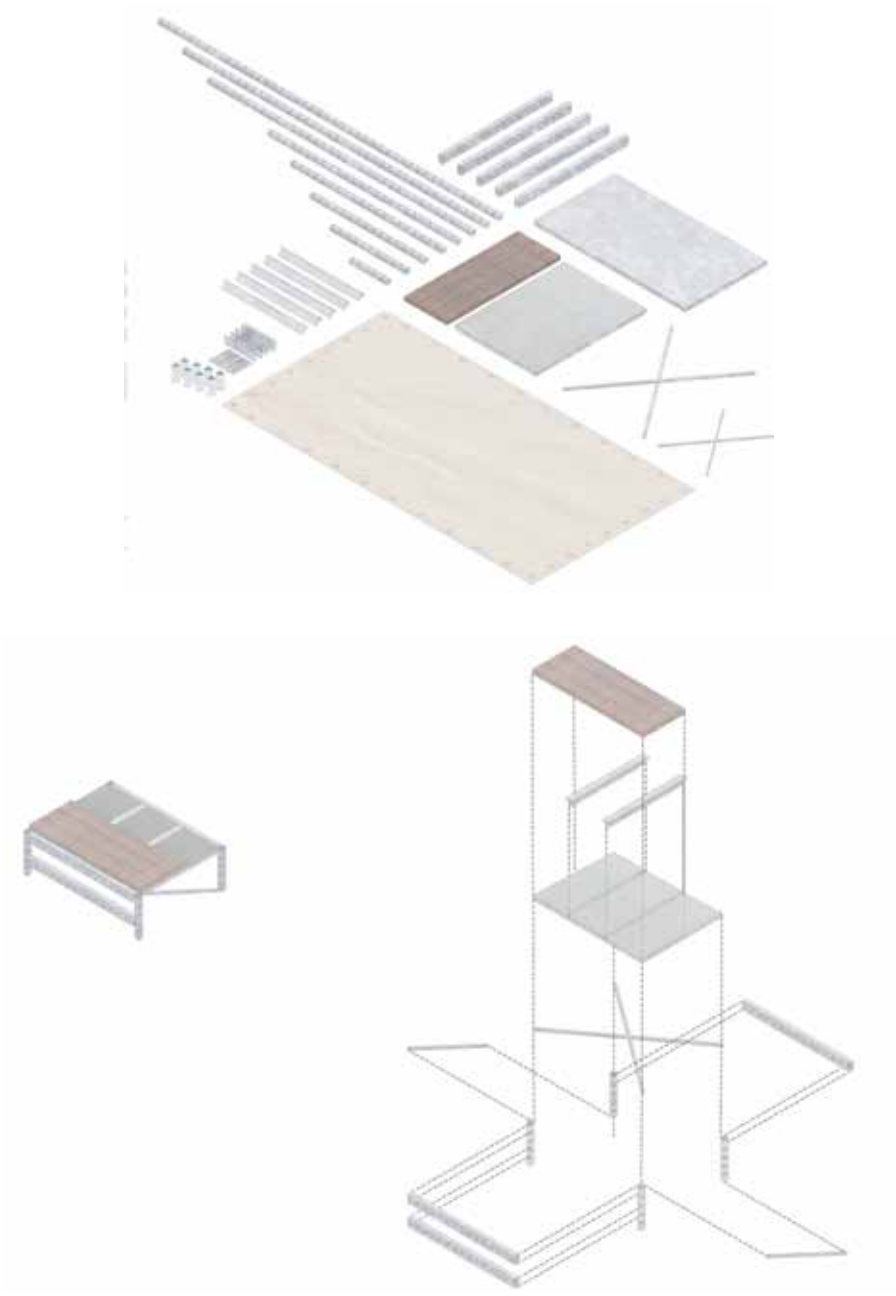
On the parking lot the attempt is to work with a time-flexibel program.
The big parking is really needed for the big shops and delivery trucks.
By adding some colored stripes on the asphalt, we get a duality of functions in time.
Next to the parking, there is coming a new indoor sport facility that will be partner with the new outside terrains on the parking. Administration, showers and so on are provided there.
together with the sport fields on the parking, there will be some structures added.
These will or can serve as tribune, lockers, billboard, bicycle parking, lunch place…

This is maybe not the most fancy eye-catching architecture to expect, but it really serves the place and the people living and working around.
It is the aim to do this in a respectful way, for everybody's needs.
Also in terms of costs will this be affordable, qualitative and durable in time and use.

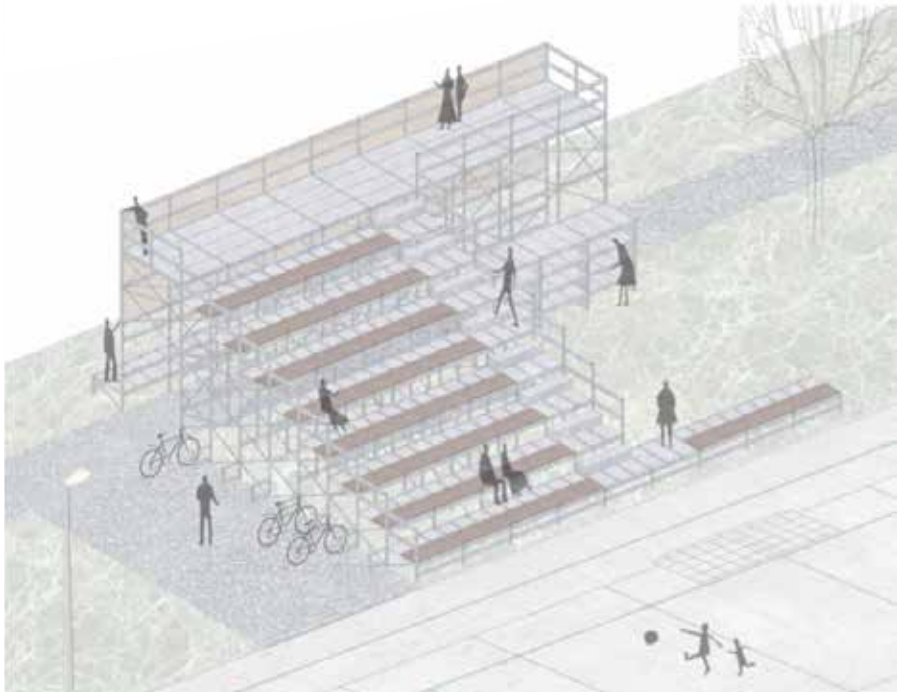
The Proposed design on the parking lot in the Dendermondsesteenweg Ghent, is a structure made out of a module. The proposal is just one of many structures you can make, remake or move.
All the modules can be made out of the same elements. These are very basic and out of durable materials. Important is also that everybody has to able to assemble or dissemble it.
That means that for example nails are forbidden, bolts and screws are good.

This way of working gives us the opportunity to be exibel in time and space. At the same time we do not need to produce again new material if we want to transform the structure.

- be inspired by the system and hack it -



Building set and assembly.



Configuration and scenario.

THE PIT

Diana Maracineanu

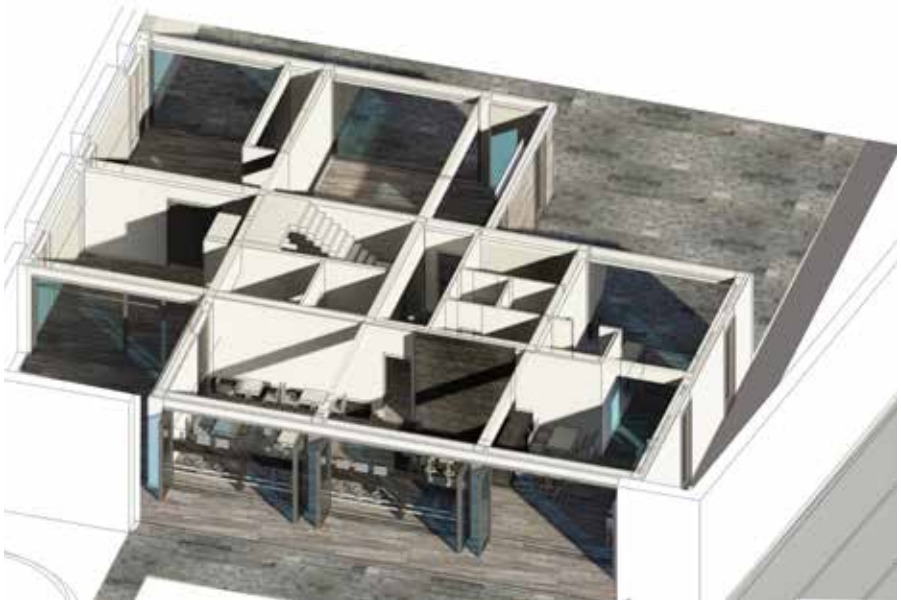
"The Pit" is located where the existing designed green area ends, with a land infill created to make the access to the parking lot possible. Thus the existing path ends in the service area of one of the stores located in the parking lot, a point where pedestrian and bicycle accessibility is not designed anymore, an area defined by a variety of edges, the new planned development of the Malmar factory (biggest co-housing project by Bogdan&van Broeck) being the most important one.

In order to extend the connection, as foreseen by our masterplan, the existing land infill needs to be removed. This creates opportunity to design a link between the new co-housing project and the "R-Lane".

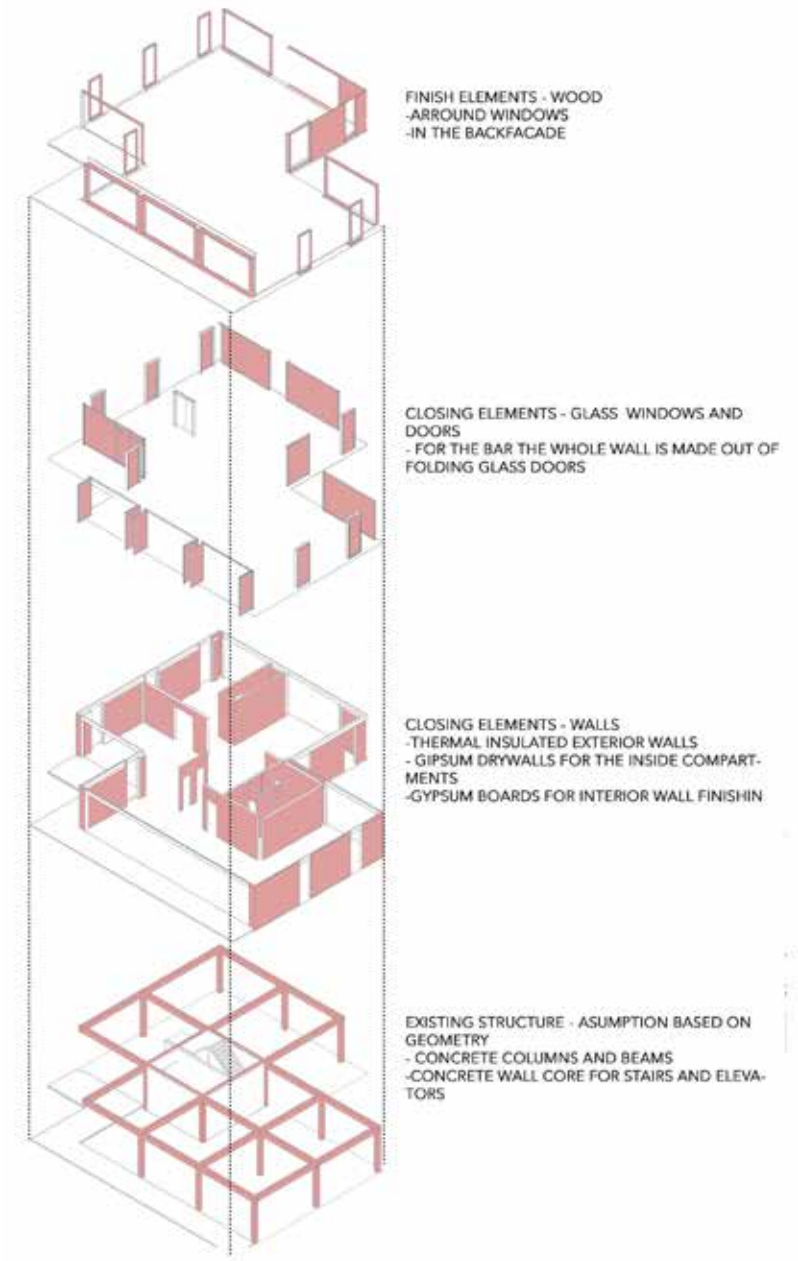
The co-housing project by Bogdan&van Broeck is mainly contained between the walls of the old factory, which will be kept in their intervention, with areas opening up towards the park. Particularly in this area where an office building is foreseen in their project a public space would be welcome.

"The Pit" takes form by "cutting" out a piece of the existing factory wall (kept in the design of the co-housing project) and "pushing" it and the earth behind it along the direction of the path, thus creating an open public space that relates both to the ground floor level of the office building, as well as to the new pathway.

Our master plan together with the new co-housing project represent the opportunity for this space to be created, but at the same time this space creates the opportunity to redesign the ground floor level of the office building, creating a new public function, a community centre. A public bar with a small administration office for the sports fields and lockers outside in the parking lot opens up towards "the Pit". The public accessible ground floor level offers also a games room and a multi-purpose room linked to the bar and opening up towards the sports hall in the back. The entrance to the offices on the upper levels is linked to "the Pit" in a more private way.



Visualisations – aco and interior.



Structural build-up.

THE CREATIVE FACTORY

Elise Oosterloo & Matilde Scali

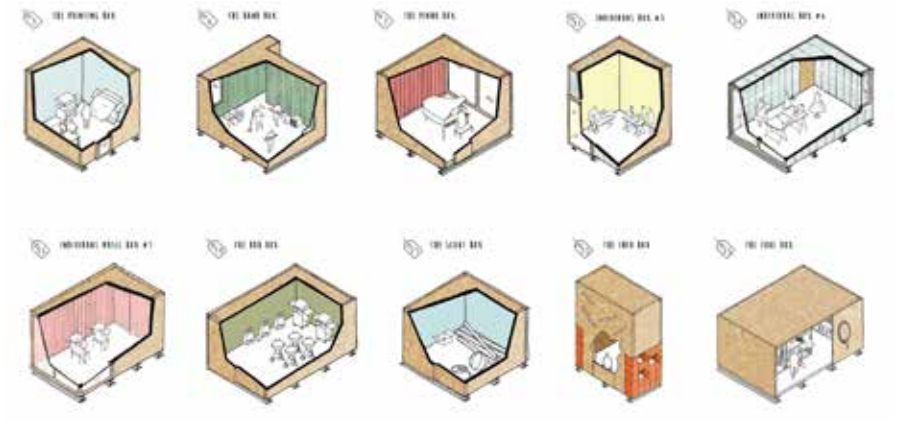
The first phase of the Design Studio MAIG24 was to map and analyze the area around Gent-Dampoort. As a group – the IBS studio – our attention went to the green hillside on top of which the railway is located and its relation toward the neighborhood. We found out that despite the high ecological quality of the area, the hillside was neglected and considered as a fence of the backyards of the houses. On the other hand, the spontaneous activities going on made us think it was worthy to revitalize. Each group member chose a spot along the hillside to develop as a project and by connecting the four spots and improving the connection toward the line, the hillside will be intensified and it won't be perceived anymore as a harsh boundary, but as a soft connection to Dampoort Station.

Close to our spot you can find a library, a high school, a university faculty, allotment gardens and the scouts. On the other hand there is a lack of spaces where you can practice a creative hobby. With the creative factory we take advantage of the existing empty factory building and because of the industrial character it's suitable as a workspace. Inside you can make your own furniture piece, model a ceramic jar, create a sculpture, attend a workshop and rehearse with your band... The intervention with the boxes is flexible in time because it doesn't touch the existing skin and let the function change according to the needs. The former gypsum board factory is composed of five different buildings, all built in different decades since the twenties. They all present a different steel structure and wall composition but they are attached together and they form a unique space.

The boxes are organized in a way that they create an open space suitable for appropriation of different kinds: workshop space, painting area, playing area... The configuration makes the experience of staying there more enjoyable and rich. Some of the boxes are private and others common. You can rent an entire private box for the maximum time of one year or you can rent a single object out of a common box for a limited amount of time.
There are also a few free boxes like the storage box, toolbox and kitchen box that offer different objects or facilities.

To achieve more interaction between the indoor and the outdoor space as well as the close context, the facades have been opened up in some parts. In this way also more light can enter in the building and in the boxes that have windows themselves. In this way the communication between different activities taking place in different boxes is also improved. There are three main prototypes of how the boxes are constructed, all based on a steel frame structure. First there is the basic OSB panel box. Secondly, the polycarbonate sheet box and last the acoustic insulated prototype. After calculating the entire building cost, taking into account the work hours and the funding by the government, the outcome is that in one year and a half of use the building, the building price will be regained. In two years and a half other ten boxes can be bought.

After speaking with the owner of the building, it came out that he wants to change the function of the building into a collective space. The creative factory could be a possible answer.



Types and uses.

MAKING OF:

TYPE 1 F.E.: THE SAW BOX

PRICE LIST

Structure	
Osb boards (25mm²)=	1.393€
Envelop insulation (125 m²)=	2.000€
Pallet wooden floor (24 m²)=	340€
Windows (10 m²)=	370€
PC beams 100 (729 kg) =	250€
TOTAL	3.930€

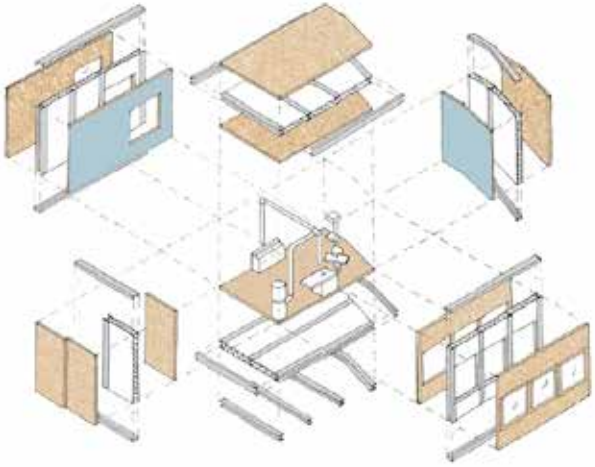
Tools	
Table saw =	400€
Wall drill =	100€
Planer =	1.500€
Workbelts =	80€
Professional screwdriver =	700€
Saw dust extractor =	300€
Manual joinery kit =	230€
TOTAL	3.340€

TOTAL BOX COST =	7.740€

SIMILAR CASES

Individual box #2	3.380€
Individual box #4	2.340€
Individual box #5	3.130€
The Sculpture box	8.470€
The Tool box	6.600€
The Painting box	7.180€
The Spray box	2.160€
The Ceramic box	1.060€
The Kitchen box	9.720€
The Info box	3.440€
The Bathroom box (x2)	3.200€
Workshop storage	3.240€
The Allotment Garden box	7.660€
The Children's Toys box	1.930€
The Outdoor recreation box	3.460€
The BBQ box	2.370€
The Tennis box	2.650€
TOTAL	61.150€

TOTAL TYPE 1 = 68.390€



Making off – building box.

THE BOOKYARD

Francesco Ogliengo

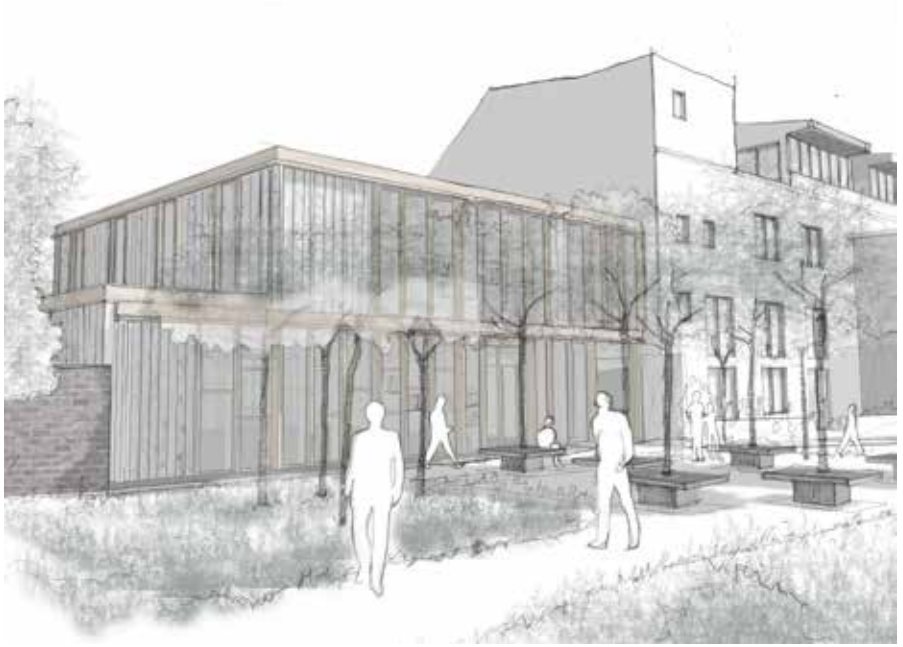
The project takes place in a plot showing a complex network of private, public and common spaces. The plot is occupied by unused parking plots, most of them are empty and used as storages. Although this in-between space is connected with private gardens and entrances, it's without quality.

In the neighborhood, close to the site, there are interesting projects that try to activate the backyard, thanks to semi-public courtyards, and public activities for the neighborhoods. These are anomalous projects, anyway, and they are isolated each other. Thanks to these observations, the idea to create a new network of indoor and outdoor small spaces for the local community. The borders of the Bookyard are generated by the houses and the private gardens that have new gates open towards the courtyard. Several activities are focused on the reading, and they try to promote social interaction and cultural exchange. The choice to activate this new semi-public packet with cultural activities related with the reading, comes from a lack of libraries in the area: the closest ones are small and the activities with children and elderly people are usually overbooked. Even the success of the cultural lectures in the bookshop 'Riot' is a signal of a positive reaction of local inhabitants.

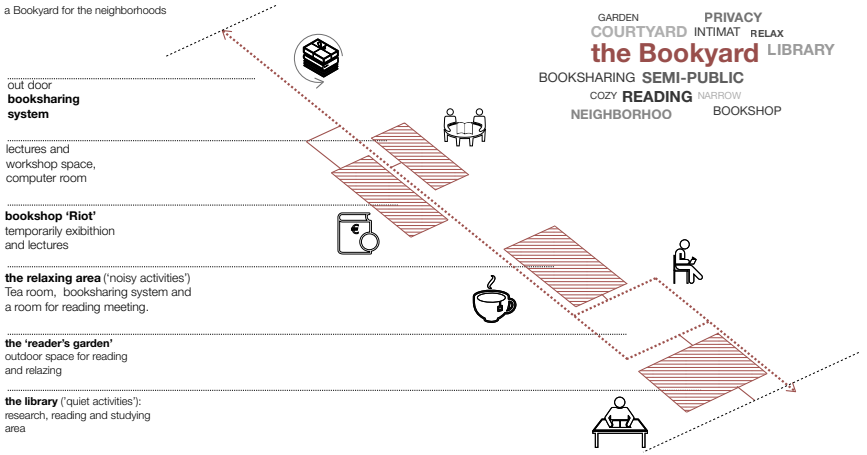
The project is something more than a public connection between the street and the public green space along the railway. The people that live there don't want to lose their privacy, and the activation of a new front and the new tunnel are a clear threat for them. For these reason the existing narrow passage and the library work as gradient between the public and the private gardens.
The connection between the street and the library is not just a 'corridor' anyway. this narrow space is activated by a book sharing system along the bricks wall and the opening with the courtyard in front of the bookshop. A green pergola generates a suggestive atmosphere that drives until the core of the Bookyard: the 'Reader's garden'.

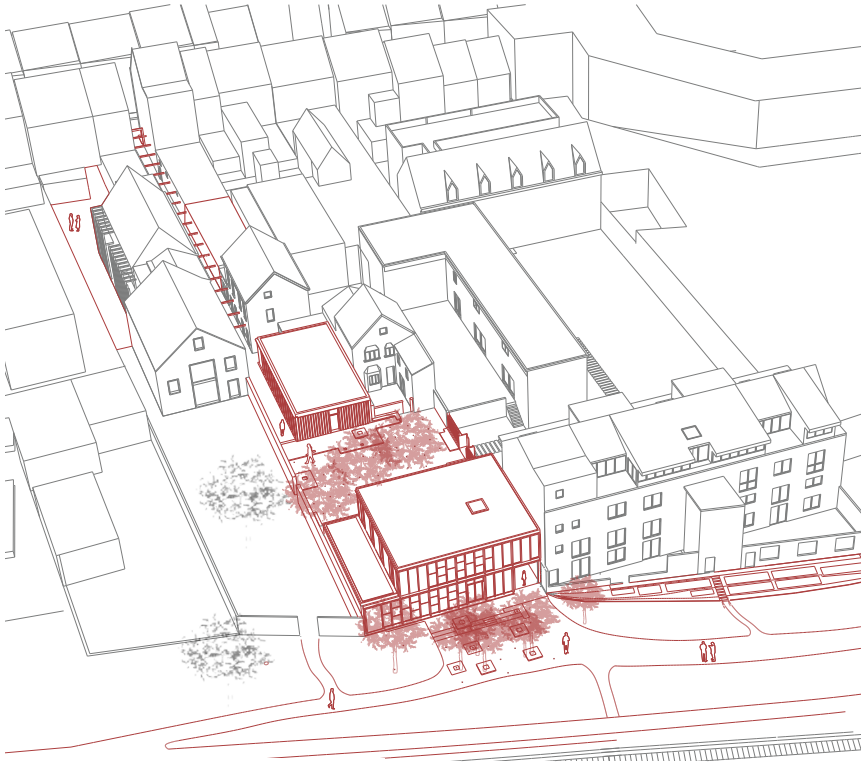
The Reader's garden is a collective 'living room', that tries to create an intimate and quite space for the neighborhoods, and the people that are attending activities in the library. The simplicity is the main characteristic, in fact the primary functions are simply for sitting, reading, relaxing, and serving as a place to meet up with peers. The dense grid of trees is an oasis in the midst of a bustling city.
The library is the main building in the Bookyard. The structure, the timber window's frame and the furniture are integrated each other, creating a cozy and suggestive atmosphere inside and outside the building.

The project wants to show a way to activate the backyard thanks to public activities, giving at the same time a concrete response to local urgencies.



Sketched impressions.





Overview structure.

BACKGARDENS

Patricia Otero

Along the called ‘green banana’ there are some row houses for co-housing communities which façades are facing the street and the back of their gardens to the banana. Those back-sides are careless for some reason and in many cases have lost their qualities. A prototype will be created and implemented in the other co-housing communities along the ‘banana’.

The aim is to create a new space for communal activities, developing and improving the quality of the area taking into account the relationship between the community, the landscape and the nature.

(1) Avoid interference in the image of the neighbourhood;
(2) The intervention should be local, using the existing elements in the neighbourhood adapting or reinterpreting them into different uses;
(3) The intervention should be reversible, flexible and removable;
(4) The intervention should be sustainable.

Axonometric overview of the backgardens.

REFUGE AND RETHREAT

Christopher Wejchert

The woodland sandwiched between the Sint-Amandsbergh neighbourhood and the railway tracks near Dampoort station was affectionately named the ‘green banana’ by locals during a recent activist campaign to save the woodland from being further destroyed to build an unnecessary cycle path. The owners of the land Infrabel, the national rail company, used to lease the land to the Municipality of Gent, who rented it to the Scouts in the neighbourhood. Inevitably the neighbourhood also began to use the woodland as a recreational space. The place began to play an important role for the neighbourhood as a place to meet each other, spend time in nature and momentarily escape from city. However, in order to mark its territory, Infrabel expanded its infrastructure right to the edge of its property and cut down more than half of the trees in the woodland to build a new railway tracks. Today the green banana is largely closed off with walls and fences, the water in the creek is extremely polluted and the area has become a dump site for old television sets. Despite this, the remaining green banana still has a magical charm and is clearly of intrinsic value to the locals. It should remain.

The first time I visited the site I was captivated by this fragile, peaceful place despite its fragmentation and destruction. It felt as though I had discovered a secret forest with hidden pathways and ducks swimming along the creek. However, the relationship along the edges of the creek were very poor. The fences, barbed wire and walls created physical and mental barriers that expressed the strained relationship between the different parties along the site. I saw potential to re-establish a connection between the neighbourhood and the woodland. The concept became to carefully reopen the green banana as a common garden for the neighbourhood through fragile interventions inside and along the woodland. They will become its caring custodians and ensure that it remains a calm, clean, and magical place for the community.

The inspiration for the two small interventions inside the woodland came from the fact that there used to be several small sheds scattered throughout the woodland. The first intervention is a hidden retreat amongst the trees for people to momentarily escape. The small shed-like timber structure is raised in order to reduce the environmental impact on the nature and to create the sense of escape as when climbing a ladder up into a tree house. The retreat also frames the most beautiful view in the creek as well as interesting views out toward the railway tracks and Sint-Amandsbergh. The second intervention is a refuge intended as a place to find warmth, shelter and knowledge. The refuge is a shed-like timber structure that opens out toward the creek and the neighbourhood. People passing by can find information such as walking maps, photographs and stories about the history and ecology of the woodland. People wanting to relax can sit on the deck in the sun and watch the ducks swim. People wishing to warm up on a cold winter day can light a fire inside the insulated building. People wanting to sleep in the woodland like the Scouts can use it as a shelter to sleep.

Atmospheric sketch – huts in the forest.

Side view, location on the hillside.

Sideview, scale of the hut.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Co-simplicity introduced students to a certain way of design-thinking. Divulgence into a self-chosen site`s essence found its conclusion into fragile and sustainable design-driven interventions.

Transcending the debate on sustainability, apposed to mainstream notions such as energy-efficiency, elucidated many students incubating sensitized design-attitudes.

As exhumed by the projects in this publication, fragility of a site in itself is a key to sustainable interventions. Revealing and triggering these often hidden potentials lies at the core of the co-simplicity design-studio`s.

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*An individualized definition of 'Kokumi' expressing PAL incubated research and stance into envisioned future societal, cultural, demographic, ecological and spatial solutions for 'the City', served as a conceptual framework to develop inventive solutions for Brussels' Liedtsplein's multi-faceted environment, taking into account its complex ethnic composition and related demographic transitions. Emphasis lay on creative urban design, enabling to explore and develop architectural proto-typologies within a rapidly evolving societal and cultural urban environment.
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Co-simplicity


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